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HAS THE CHURCH FAILED ?

HAS THE CHURCH FAILED?

BY

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"Out of Darkness," "Why I Believe," etc., etc.



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HAS THE CHURCH FAILED ?

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT GENERAL STATISTICS REVEAL

I

The Danger of the Complacent Attitude

WHATEVER may happen to be our individual attitude towards religion, it is impossible that we should view with indifference the problem of the religious future. If we are orthodox Christians, or disciples of one of the less conventional religious movements, the problem obviously concerns us closely. But, even if we profess no kind of allegiance to any body of opinion, we are compelled, if we are intelligently interested in the fortunes of the human race, to give some consideration to what is happening in the religious life of the world to-day. For religious ideas—using this term in its widest sense—have a vital influence on human conduct. It is doubtful whether religious ideas are not the most fundamental influence in society. Indeed, this assertion will be accepted, not only by religious-minded people, but by those who are entirely sceptical in their religious outlook. For if religion is merely a superstition, it is

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essential that mankind should shake off such slavish fetters from its belief. From that stand-point the triumph of rational intelligence depends upon the overthrow of religion, and the religious future is, accordingly, as important a problem as it is to one who accepts the Christian Faith.

I shall confine my remarks primarily to England and to what is happening in English religious thought.

It is also necessary to explain that, as the word "Church" is used by different people in different ways, I shall imply all the organized Christian denominations when I speak of the "Christian Church" or the "Churches." The religious vocabulary is, unfortunately, complicated by the various uses which one word often serves, especially as these various uses frequently involve the acceptance or denial of claims, which are in themselves a matter of controversy. I desire to avoid any controversy in the mere employment of terms, and I therefore commence with this explanation.

The moment that the question of the future of religion is raised there are two possible and popular attitudes which may be adopted.

The first of these standpoints assumes that there is nothing seriously wrong with the position of the Churches. Any suggestion that the prospects of religion are dark is regarded as alarmism without any justifiable foundation. The second stand-point, which we have already anticipated, regards the break-up of institutional religion as inevitable. As mankind becomes more educated, it has learnt

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to throw off the superstitions which clouded the vision of former generations. The destruction of all Christian Creeds is merely a matter of time. The decay has set in, and gradually, perhaps rapidly, the world will put belief in supernatural religion where it has put witchcraft, and will grow up into a rational agnosticism based, not on faith, but on scientific knowledge.

Both of these conclusions are, in my opinion, demonstrably false.

Let us first consider what may be described as the complacent attitude of a considerable number of professing Christians.

It is not difficult to drift into a complacent attitude. The organization of any of the major Christian bodies is so comparatively large that it is easy enough to live within their sanctuary without appreciating what is happening outside. The smallest denomination numbers several thousand adherents. The man or woman whose chief interest lies in the work of his Church or denomination is surrounded by various evidences of its activity and progress. He meets others who are equally enthusiastic. His own congregation shows no signs of failure. He reads his weekly Church newspaper which tells him of similarly successful centres in other parts of the world. He has no time or inclination to take a wider view, and his estimate is confined to the single groove in which he happens to live. Many of us become suburbanized in our outlook—that is, if we do not make a deliberate mental effort to obtain

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a deeper sense of proportion. How well I remember our local war-time impressions during the German drive of 1918! On our small Armentières sector the suggestion that the enemy was failing in his offensive and was losing the war, seemed literally incredible. For our own front was broken. Every day fresh ground was being surrendered. How could there be any other conclusion than that, after three and a half weary years, we were defeated and the enemy within sight of ultimate victory?

It is our immediate circumstances which chiefly colour our impressions, and it is not surprising to find that many of those who are directly concerned with the fortunes of their particular Church are least aware of the significance of the actual situation.

II

The Apparent Decline of Orthodoxy

The position of the Church of England will be a convenient example to take, in answer to the complacent theory, partly because her position is characteristic, in the main, of what is happening elsewhere, and partly because her claim to be the national Church places her in a more prominent position than that of any other religious body in this country.

The number of ordination candidates (deacons)

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in the Church of England in the immediate pre-war years was somewhere about 600 annually. Actually, if we take the years 1910, 1908, 1905, 1900, and 1897 as examples, the figures were respectively 672, 670, 614, 650, and 652. In 1925 this total had sunk to 371, and in 1926 to 353, while in 1927 it had risen to 393. Commenting on these figures, the editor of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* assumes that there is no immediate indication that the average figure per year will appreciably exceed 350. Against this figure there must be set the average annual loss to the Anglican ministry in the Provinces of Canterbury and York, by death and retirement, namely 550, a net decrease of some 200 clergy per year. "It is not too much to say," the editor declares, "that, if the history of the last ten years is continued for another ten, the effective ministrations of the parochial system will have become impossible in all but a few favoured localities. Anything which can fairly be called the Church of England will have ceased to exist, and its place will have been taken by the spasmodic activities of a denomination."

This shortage of candidates may, however, be attributed by the complacent optimist to financial conditions, want of funds for training ordinands, and low pay in the ministry itself. Let us turn, therefore, to other figures. According to the *Official Year Book of the Church of England* the number of infant baptisms in 1924 amounted to 478,267. In 1925 it had fallen to 465,625. In

1926 (the last year given in the 1927 edition) it was 455,142. Comparing these with previous years we find 575,590 in 1909-10, 594,931 in 1908-9, and 596,162 in 1907-8, a steady annual decrease which in ten years has reached 140,000. Baptisms of "persons of riper years" show the same trend. In 1924 the total was 12,380, in 1925 12,329, and in 1926 11,771. Again the pre-war years yield a significant contrast, 15,691 in 1909-10, 18,918 in 1908-9, 15,210 in 1907-8. In fact, while adult baptisms a decade ago were in the fifteen thousands, now they have fallen even below 12,000. The figures showing the total of males and females confirmed may also be worth quoting. In 1923 the total was 233,427, in 1924 226,766, in 1925 219,092, and in 1926 209,565, a drop of 10,000 per year. The pre-war confirmation figures (1900-10) vary considerably. In 1909 the figure was 243,457, in 1903 226,361. In 1900 there was, for some reason, a peculiarly low total, only 195,673 confirmations being recorded.

There are some people to whom statistics mean nothing, and such persons will probably maintain that, where one is dealing with hundreds of thousands, decreases of the sort which I am quoting imply nothing serious. There may be a reaction, a revival of enthusiasm for the Church, or a hundred other possibilities and explanations. The leakage may be arrested and the position may become no worse than it is now. But, if we are going to adopt that argument, we must look again

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at the figures of membership of the English Church. The number of Easter communicants is about 2,380,000, with infant baptisms and confirmations amounting to some 670,000—that is a total of a little over three million. The total population of England and Wales (1921) is 37,885,242, so that, allowing for the fact that the ecclesiastical figures do not cover Wales, the total membership of the Church of England is less than a tenth of the population. And it must be remembered that these figures include a certain proportion of nominal members—persons who go to Communion on Easter Day, or who have their children baptized and confirmed, but have no active sympathy for the Church.

Those who belong to some religious body other than the Church of England will eagerly reply that these figures confirm that the National Church is divided, a city of confusion, propped up by the artificial prestige of establishment, and bereft entirely of that vitality which animates her rivals.

Well, let us glance at the position of the other Churches or denominations.

According to Whitaker (1928) the total membership of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales is 2,055,060. There has been no religious census since 1851, so these figures are supplied, as in the case of the Church of England, by the ecclesiastical authorities themselves. Two million out of thirty-seven millions—less than an eighteenth of the whole! The Nonconformist bodies are infinitely smaller. The total number of

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Wesleyan Methodists in Great Britain and Ireland is 549,100 ; Primitive Methodist, 220,806, and United Methodist Church 155,517. Baptists (Ireland included) number 416,665, and Jews about 300,000. The number of Congregationalists is not given in Whitaker's, but they possess only 4,808 churches and preaching stations in the whole of the British Isles.

It will, no doubt, be claimed by Roman Catholics that their total increases every year, and that their figures must be read in that context. The number of converts is given for 1924 as 12,355¹ and for 1923 as 12,796, so that we may take 12,500 as an average annual increase. But this is a minute figure when we are dealing with the whole population, and we do not know the annual leakage of active Roman Catholics to a merely nominal membership, or from nominal membership to a definite non-membership. Even in my own small personal circle of acquaintances I know many people who have drifted completely away from Roman Catholicism, and I suspect that it is not inaccurate to say that the net annual progress of the Church of Rome in this country is in so infinitesimal a proportion to the national population that it is not worth considering. Moreover, we must remember that the largest proportion of Roman Catholic converts in England comes from the ranks of professing Anglicans, so that their number shows no increase for institutional religion, considered as a whole. The case

¹ Catholic Directory, 1926.

of the Nonconformists is still more obvious—indeed, they openly deplore the lack of progress which they are making, and they are faced with problems of a shortage of candidates for the ministry quite as acute as any which confront the Church of England.

III

The Position of Unorthodoxy

Are these figures an indication that the majority of English men and women are drifting over to what I will call the “unorthodox” bodies?

Immediately after the War there were some indications of a movement towards Spiritualism. The enormous number of bereaved relatives constituted a field in which the consolations of communication with the dead could offer a strong appeal. And it must be remembered that, although among those who frequent Spiritualist meetings and séances, and accept the Spiritualist claims, there are a large proportion of persons who belong to other religious bodies, or who profess no definite religious creed, Spiritualism nevertheless provides an organized religion for those who desire it, with services and worship of its own.

It is impossible, for purposes of statistics, to draw a line between those who are only curious as to Spiritualist phenomena, and those who are

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entirely convinced. But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle provided, according to the *Evening Standard* of Sept. 14th, 1928, a convenient figure. He was estimating—very roughly, of course—the number of parliamentary electors who were sufficiently sympathetic to Spiritualism to vote only for those candidates who would pledge themselves to a repeal of the law under which mediums can be prosecuted. He gave that figure as 200,000. And when we remember that this presumably includes some of those who agree that the present law is unjust, but may not be whole-hearted believers in the Spiritualist claim, we shall see that Spiritualism numbers a tiny fraction of the whole population, even though we set against that figure the total Spiritualist supporters who are unfortunate enough not to possess a parliamentary vote.

My Christian Scientist friends are always assuring me of the amazing progress which their movement is making, and they point to the churches and reading-rooms which meet the eye in London and in every large English town. I have been duly impressed with the vast congregation which pours out of the stately edifice by Sloane Square every Sunday morning, and the array of luxurious cars parked in its vicinity. This, I am ready to agree, is happening every Sunday at every Christian Science centre. But what does it prove? Even in London the Christian Science churches are less than twenty in number. Imagine what would be the case if the Anglicans or Roman Catholics in London reduced

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the total of their churches to twenty and concentrated their congregations in these few centres ! The Christian Scientists would be swamped, so as to be a mere handful by comparison. I should imagine that the total number of worshippers at the early weekday Masses in Westminster Cathedral vastly exceeds the largest Sunday morning Christian Scientist congregation in any of their London churches.

The Theosophists are probably the only other "unorthodox" religious organization of any size. I have been to several Theosophist meetings, and, on each occasion, I have been impressed by the absence of men. "Ours is almost entirely a woman's movement," a prominent Theosophist once admitted to me. I am not suggesting that this is a condemnation, but I am tempted to reflect that, when the taunt is flung at the Anglican or Roman Catholic Churches that their male adherents are so entirely outnumbered, the case of the Theosophists, and, indeed, of most of the unorthodox denominations, is certainly no better in this respect.

The other "unorthodox" bodies are too small to be taken into consideration. Organized Rationalism, Secularism, Positivism, the various ethical societies, are tiny centres, filled for the most part with cranks who reveal all the characteristics of extreme sectarians. If any one of them can boast the total of a million, I shall be glad to acknowledge their existence, in the improbable event of this book running into a second edition.

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It may, of course, be urged that, in one or more of these examples, the estimates are unfair because they do not show the rapid progress which is being made. A Christian Scientist may protest that his Church has only begun to function, and that, now we have secured religious freedom, half a century will see the whole of England Christian Scientist. I can only reply that I do not see the slightest evidence to lead me to believe in such a development. It is, of course, impossible to anticipate by normal human means every eventuality. We can only take the evidence of what is actually occurring, and from that evidence deduce probabilities. Every religious body of any size can, no doubt, point to a measure of progress and an additional membership, and some denominations can show an increase of converts much greater than that of their competitors. But what the enthusiastic optimist will not realize is that, if his Church is to prove that it provides the main, or a main roadway towards which national thought is moving, he must produce his figures—if he is going to appeal to figures at all—not in hundreds or thousands, but in hundreds of thousands. And, if he replies that, after all, statistics are not the test, and that the progress of evangelization must be reckoned by more subtle evidence—well, we will consider his case in a moment.

IV

Religionists a handful of the Population

What do these statistics prove?

They do not necessarily prove what at first sight might appear to be the inevitable conclusion—the conclusion to which Rationalist critics untiringly point. They do not necessarily prove that religious beliefs are crumbling to pieces before the advance of intelligence and education. For, particularly in the case of the Church of England, we have to allow for the fact that it is no longer a conventional duty to go to church and to profess a religious creed. The consequence is that, though reduced in numbers, the Church tends more and more only to contain those who desire, of their own free will and conviction, to be numbered in her ranks.

And, contrary to what our secularist friends would wish us to believe, it is therefore true that religious bodies in this country are in a healthier condition than in previous generations. They have shed most of their merely nominal supporters. It is no longer a social disgrace to leave the Church in which you have been brought up. It is true, of course, that there are, as there probably will always be, a proportion of half-hearted, unenthusiastic members, who only refrain from breaking away because they do not want to make the effort to do so, and are held by sentimental, traditional,

or disciplinary ties. My experience would show that there are just as many of these in the Roman Catholic Communion and Nonconformity, as in the Church of England, and that they are beginning to appear in the older unorthodox bodies. But the formal adherent is in a minority ; there are few adults to-day who go regularly to church, and yet dislike and disbelieve in it.

No, these figures do not necessarily prove a chronic decay. They reveal a process, rather, of drastic purgation. But that is very far from being a justification for complacency.

For, consider the position in aggregate. On a very generous estimate there are three million Anglicans, three million Roman Catholics, two million Nonconformists, and perhaps eight hundred thousand "Unorthodox" adherents. That is less than nine million out of a population of thirty-seven million, much less than a quarter of the whole. Far worse is the position from the point of view of any single denomination which regards itself as the one true Church, but which has nevertheless succeeded in drawing to the truth only a tiny fragment of the nation.

The conclusion which can fairly be drawn is that, from the point of view of one, or of all the combined religious bodies, the situation is serious, even if it grows no worse than it is. But if we press the moral further, and show that, allowing for the increase of population, the tendency is for membership to decrease, the position is even more serious. In the Church of England, as we have

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seen, the evidence shows a steady and unmistakable decrease, and I doubt whether many of the other institutional "orthodox" bodies can produce a more favourable balance. If they can, it is clear that their present numbers are so small and their advance is so comparatively minute, that they have nothing upon which to congratulate themselves. So far, reckoning by statistics, their record is virtually a failure. And there is no indication on the immediate horizon that they are likely to turn their failure into success.

v

The Evidence of General Observation

But are statistics reliable? Have we not already admitted that these figures do not, on the face of them, account for the more virile condition which obtains in all bodies, now that they no longer rely on a quasi-compulsory adherence?

It would certainly be dangerous to draw conclusions from figures alone. A Church made up of a hundred keen devotees is likely to be more active a force than a Church with a thousand indifferent members. Influence and virility cannot be reckoned by mathematics.

But statistics cannot be ignored, and, if we turn to a general common-sense estimate of the ecclesiastical situation, we find that the moral of

the figures is confirmed rather than confuted. Let any ordinary man or woman of the world consider his or her circle of friends and acquaintances. How many of them belong to any organized religious body?

If it were not for the fact that I am addressing myself chiefly to the complacent type of religionist, it would be unnecessary to labour the point. For the facts are obvious beyond any possibility of denial. No religious body can number as its members more than a tiny fraction of the population. Not one of them represents a main current of public opinion. A man who goes regularly to church, to any sort of church, is a marked exception : for every one of these there are probably ninety who do not. What impresses me so much as a sign of modern change is that I frequently meet in various kinds of gatherings elderly and middle-aged ladies who, a generation ago, would have been, without exception, orthodox, but who now are not Christians at all. I do not know that that is necessarily a great loss to Christianity, but it is interesting, as showing how completely the religious tradition has ceased to be an orthodox convention.

If we take the younger generation—not children, who may be compulsorily taken to church—but young men of twenty to thirty—we shall probably find the proportion still lower.

For many years I have been associated with the Anglo-Catholic Movement, and I can testify, therefore, of my own personal experience, to the

remarkable enthusiasm and activity which is to be found in its ranks. It is easy enough to be persuaded by a Congress which filled the Albert Hall for a week that the Movement is sweeping the country. Yet, as a matter of fact, it is successful only in comparison with the failure of certain rivals. Actually it is a tiny drop in the ocean, boasting more young men and women than many religious movements can claim, but still largely a clerical and female movement, and probably amounting in all (in England) to less than a hundred thousand. I have been told that Rome retains her men, and I have been impressed by the numbers of men at a High Mass in Brompton Oratory or Westminster Cathedral. Similarly I have visited Nonconformist churches, where I have been told that the male attendance was remarkable. It was remarkable, compared with what obtains elsewhere. But I doubt if there is a single congregation in England, of any denomination, which can point even to five hundred men as regular attendants.

The same sense of misproportion seems to haunt the enthusiastic apologists for various "unorthodox" cults. I know that some of my Christian Scientist friends are honestly convinced that theirs is a great national religious revival. In vain I reply that I see little more evidence for this than that England is becoming Jacobite. I cannot think of any Englishman or Englishwoman of first-class standing who has become a Christian Scientist in the last ten years. The Spiritualists

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can claim Sir William Crookes and Mr. F.W. H. Myers, and, to a certain extent, Sir Oliver Lodge ; and the Roman Catholics can point to Mr. G. K. Chesterton and Ronald Knox. The very fact that these are notorious examples proves that they are highly exceptional. But the Christian Scientist cannot claim any intellectual converts.

I do not offer these comments either in a pessimistic or optimistic vein. I do not present them with any hostile intent. I desire only to insist on the realities of the religious situation. And the situation seems to me to be, beyond all question, that, though many religious bodies are showing increased signs of activity, though they have cleared their decks and removed a great deal of the useless impedimenta which they formerly carried, though, by reason of competition and hostile criticism, they are in a purer and healthier condition than at any previous period, they are, from a national point of view, side-tracks. The great mass of the nation, and, above all, of the younger generation, are not moving in their direction. Where is English thought tending ? That is the problem which I am setting myself to answer.

CHAPTER TWO

MODERN OBJECTIONS TO ORTHODOX MORALITY

I

The Moral Failures of the Church in the Past

PERHAPS the most direct method of determining whither English thought is tending is to discover the reasons why the break-away from organized religion is taking place.

In order to approach the issues more directly, I shall identify myself, as far as possible, with the standpoint of the modern man who looks out upon the Church or Churches, but declines to enter their portals. I shall voice his criticism—although it must be clearly understood that I do not, at this stage of the proceedings, commit myself either to an approval or disapproval of his case. The criticism falls naturally under two heads, moral and intellectual. I shall represent the moral criticism first, although it is probably less fundamental a criticism than the intellectual. Nevertheless it is comparatively fundamental—that is to say, it is far removed from those superficial causes to which some people attribute the widening breach between Church and nation. For, at least we may be sure of this : that neither

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the advent of the motor-car nor the dullness nor the length of services, neither an increase of ceremonial nor poverty of ministerial stipends, are sufficient reasons for empty churches and a dearth of ordination candidates. To look in such directions for an explanation as to the refusal of the vast mass of the modern generation to ally itself to any organized religion, is like saying that the present railway distress is due to the dislike of passengers to overheated carriages in winter. The breach goes so deep that the causes themselves must be radical.

In every profession and business and industry to-day there is an immense over-proportion of supply to demand of labour. There are thousands of men and women eager to turn their hand to any work, and even to undergo a period of training, provided they can be ultimately sure of regular employment. Recently an advertisement for a village organist, with a salary of £50 a year, brought in a hundred applications from all parts of Great Britain. An advertisement for any post worth £300 a year will draw innumerable answers. Yet the Church cannot find enough ordinands to fill her vacancies, though at least £200 a year is usually offered for a curate, and though the shortage of supply itself holds out the prospect of a much higher remuneration than is given by many of the secular appointments which men are scrambling over each other to obtain.

We must look for far deeper causes. And the first of these causes can be classified as moral in nature.

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First of all the modern man or woman looks back at the moral record of institutional Christianity, and sees that its record is far from clean. The Roman Catholic Church is often represented as the worst offender. She has been guilty of unspeakable cruelty in her dealings with heresy—the tortures of the Inquisition remain one of the blackest pages in the whole of human history, a stain which not the most ingenious apology can wipe away. It must be remembered, however, that the persecuting element in the Catholic Church was largely provoked by Protestant intolerance and by the fact that Martin Luther, in striking at the Church, threatened what was the very pivot of the social life of mediævalism. The mediæval Church was far more tolerant than Whig historians have allowed us to suppose. Her abuses were far less widespread than Luther, in his clumsy vituperations, admitted. And, what is more, the Church was working to reform herself long before the Protestant revolution. Had the reforms of Erasmus prevailed, and had Luther not existed, the world would be a much happier and better place to-day. It is easy enough to idealize the mediæval Church : but it is equally easy to underestimate her piety, learning, and incalculable service to mankind.

The Roman Catholic Church has had, and has, her abuses : but other religious bodies also have their unpleasant skeletons. They have burnt, they have tortured, they have persecuted their unhappy victims. It is true that these things

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belong to the past and that diabolical methods of propaganda are no longer used. But how far is this due to the voluntary conversion of the Churches themselves? The change of heart has come rather from the spread of education and general enlightenment. Far from teaching the ideals of mercy and forgiveness to the world, it is, in this respect, the world which has taught the Church.

No one but a bigoted Rationalist will deny the immense influence for good which, in the past, the Christian Church has provided; and the modern man is not a bigoted Rationalist. But the balance on the other side is heavy. There have been saints and heroes in every age. But we must judge the Christian Church by her corporate policy and behaviour, and it is doubtful whether, in the main, she has set any better example than many of the Christian or even pagan States.

If we turn from the more distant to the more recent past it is more difficult to frame a verdict—difficult largely because the issues on which she should be judged are, to some extent, living controversies. Some critics would say that the Church has failed to take a sufficiently prominent place in protest against social evils, such as sweated labour and slum conditions. But I shall not quote this indictment, because there are other critics who would declare that the Church has been wise to steer clear of any political complications. Similarly, we are not yet all agreed about war. There are still a certain number of apparently

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intelligent people who believe that war is a necessary method of settling disputes. All that can be claimed as a unanimous opinion on that score is that the Church gave no particularly clear lead in the Great War. She did not say : "Stop this slaughter and refuse to take up arms." Nor did she say : "The German atrocities in Belgium show that the Central Powers are the agents of Satan : they must be exterminated." The Catholic Church and the Protestant bodies in Germany blessed colours and invoked the aid of God just as confidently as the most patriotic chaplain of the Allied forces : but there was a distinct hesitation on the part of all religious bodies to commit themselves to sheer militarist patriotism. They deplored the War, but blessed the colours. Pacifism was left to the Quakers and the atheist freethinkers like Bertrand Russell.

II

Criticism of Orthodox Moral Values

The test, however, so far as the modern man and woman is concerned, does not lie in the past. The past is relevant only so far as it has a relevance, as we shall see, to present problems.

There has always been a pietist streak in the ideal which religion has preached to the world, varying in degree among the different forms of

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Christianity. To some extent this produces a quite inevitable conflict between human nature and religion. Human nature, judged by any standard, is imperfect, and there should be, in any case, a struggle between its tendencies and the influences of a spiritual gospel. In every age it is the minority of men who have taken kindly to religious exercises, to prayer and corporate worship and the repression or subjugation of the more animal instincts. There will be drunkards and thieves and sex libertines in every generation, and no Church could afford to make terms with sin, without forfeiting its claims to be a Church.

But the clash of modern moral ethics and religious codes goes deeper than that. And the cause is to be found largely in what I have called the pietist streak. The type of man or woman which the Christian Church has canonized, as representing the most perfect human standard, has been largely an ascetic type. There have been exceptions, but most of the saints and heroes of all religions have possessed traits of character which, judged by modern standards, would be considered highly undesirable. They have been violent fanatics, ruthless exterminators of heresy, or mystics so removed from sympathy with human life that we are not inspired to desire to follow their example. The virile type has not, on the whole, predominated, and where it is represented, as by St. Ignatius Loyola, it has often been difficult to avoid an impression of an almost savage ferocity of outlook regarding heretics.

MODERN OBJECTIONS TO MORALITY

But we must press this analogy from past to present conditions, if we are to appreciate the divergence between religious and modern secular ideals. That divergence can be expressed quite crudely. The deeply religious man and woman, the product who has responded most completely to the religious method, is frequently not the nicest of types. Indeed, he or she is often distinctly repugnant. Holiness in practice does not produce the best results. Devout Catholics who go regularly to the sacraments, or devout Protestants who spend their lives largely in prayer and scriptural reading, are often extremely bad-tempered and uncharitable in their opinions about other people. It has been said that there are no circles in which scandal-mongering is more rife than in a religious congregation. There seem to be certain virtues missing in the extreme religious devotee, a want of generosity of outlook, or a want of charity in regard to sinners, which suggest a miscalculation in regard to values. It is dangerous, of course, to lay too much stress on personal examples. A number of other considerations may enter in to confuse the issue. But, in spite of such considerations and of the notable exceptions to this general conclusion, the impression needs to be recorded.

It needs to be recorded in this context because we are led at once to the fundamental difference between the orthodox and the worldly sense of moral values. Religion must be, to some degree, as we have seen, a kill-joy influence, so long as

there are certain forms of joy which are considered to be evil. The trouble is that religion has made what are, from the modern point of view, gross mistakes in its conclusion as to what is evil, and in its estimates as to the comparative gravity of different evils.

Puritanism, for example, has been a notorious offender. Fifty years ago all forms of Protestantism, directly or partially infected with Puritanism, regarded theatre-going as a sin of the most dangerous order. To read secular books, to take recreation, or to play the piano on a Sunday, was to invite certain damnation. It is almost impossible for us to realize how completely this amazing tyranny prevailed over English, and still more, over Scottish conventions. To-day we know that this tradition was, at best, a grotesque exaggeration. Even the Nonconformist now goes to the theatre and the films. Dances are organized by the strictest Baptists in aid of chapel funds. The extreme Puritan, save where some valiant diehard survives in a lonely last ditch, has disappeared.

It may be argued that, since Protestantism to-day has dropped this irrational Puritanism, it should not be blamed for the sins of its forefathers. But the complete *volte-face* of modern Protestantism is an admission that it was very seriously wrong in its previous moral estimates. And, if it was wrong then, it may be wrong now. It has proved an unreliable guide. For it still denounces a great deal of what modern men and

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women regard as perfectly innocent and healthy pleasure.

Catholics are sometimes apt to make capital out of the puritan excesses of Protestant Christianity and to contrast the sanity of their own religion. But it must not be forgotten that there are puritan strains to be found in both the past and present Catholic attitude. The Chesterton-Belloc school has given us a picturesque theory of the merrie England of medieval times, but I suspect that, if we were able to transport ourselves to those distant days we should find that the Church frowned upon, rather than encouraged, a good deal of the merry-making. Mr. Coulton has probably a certain amount of truth on his side when he insists that the Protestant Puritans merely emphasized and developed medieval Catholic teaching. Certainly in modern times there is a very distinct puritan strain in the papal decrees which are to be found on the doors of continental churches, dealing with women's dresses, dancing, the relations of the sexes, and so forth. What some would call freedom, and some continental laxity, is much more in spite of the Church than because of her. There are many respects in which Catholic Spain is immensely puritan, notably in the conventions which govern a betrothed couple.

When we pass from the realm of general policy to concrete moral dogmas we find that, in certain directions, the divergence as to standards of value is even more marked. It is the Roman Catholic attitude which excites the largest amount of secular

criticism, in this respect, because Roman Catholic moral regulations are much more clearly defined than those of any other Christian body : Anglican and Protestant moral teaching is less dogmatically certain. A Roman Catholic, for example, who goes off in his car on Sunday, instead of going to Mass, is guilty of mortal sin. If he should be killed in a motor accident before any priest can give him absolution, he dies guilty of mortal sin. To the modern man such a claim, or even the suggestion of such a claim, is literally incredible. No doubt a Roman Catholic has done wrong to ignore the obligation which his Church solemnly imposes upon him of going to Mass. But to suggest that this is a mortal, that is to say, a major sin, implies a value in disciplinary rules, not as a means to a spiritual end, but as an end in themselves.

III

The Divorce Problem

But there are two moral issues of social prominence at the present time, where the clash of secular and religious ethics is even more keenly emphasized.

The first of these is divorce, and the second is birth control.

The law of the Catholic Church in regard to divorce is clear, and admits of no exceptions. If a

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valid marriage has taken place, and, for some cause or other, the parties separate from one another, neither of them may re-marry during the lifetime of the other. They must either resume cohabitation or remain celibate. The Protestant bodies are, as in most other instances, less sure in their attitude. All of them would probably allow remarriage after divorce for adultery, the standpoint which was adopted by the English law in 1857. But, in general, they dislike divorce.

Those who dispute the right of religion to interfere with individual moral conduct, and those who desire a system of unrestricted divorce and comparative free love, are naturally in violent opposition to the Catholic law. But the majority of men and women do not want free love. They realize that, apart from any religious sanctions, marriage is a natural human state, and that permanency is normally the inherent principle of marriage. When a young man and woman become husband and wife, they take a house or flat, with every intention of settling down for life. The children are a permanent bond between them. If they are really in love, no quarrel should be sufficient to drive them apart. Their union will survive even the temporary unfaithfulness of one or the other. And often, where the husband or wife has fallen a victim to some incurable disease, or has been sent to prison for a long sentence, the other partner would never dream of seeking a release, so as to start out on married life afresh.

So far, then, the ideas of modern society and of

the Catholic Church are not fundamentally in conflict. Every reasonable man recognizes the element of permanency in a happy marriage. The difficulty arises where marriages are not happy. The direct clash comes over separation. It comes because the Church refuses to allow any exception to her law. And the result of this is to create inevitable hardships, amounting in extreme cases to actual cruelty, if the Catholic law is rigorously obeyed.

Such examples are so notorious that there is no need to quote them at length. A young girl is hurried into marriage by her parents before she knows her own mind ; or she consents to marry a man with whom she imagines she is in love, though she knows little about him. After a few months of married life, her husband discloses ugly traits of character which make her life unbearable. He is brutal, a drunkard, or grossly unfaithful. The girl may separate from him, if the conditions become sufficiently acute, and if she is prepared to remain a life-long celibate. But then the other man appears. She falls genuinely in love. The other man is worthy of her and will make her happy. But the Catholic Church sternly forbids this intimacy. If she lives with him, or obtains a legal divorce, she is excommunicated for ever from the sacraments. She is an adulteress. Because of her previous mistake, a mistake which she may have had no possible means of avoiding, she must forego matrimonial happiness for the whole of her dissolute husband's existence.

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This law is not an arbitrary invention of the Catholic Church. It rests on the words of Christ, as recorded in the Gospel. The exception, which is made in the passage in St. Matthew, increases rather than removes the difficulty. Nothing could work out worse in practice than the principle of our English civil law, which is based on this passage, and which is the standpoint which some Anglicans and most Nonconformists would accept. If adultery (fornication?) is made the one ground for divorce, other than death, a premium is literally placed on adultery. Hundreds of cases occur to-day in which adultery is committed solely in order to procure a divorce. It is difficult to imagine any possible moral excuse by which such a state of affairs can be justified.

Moreover, it introduces this strange inconsistency. A single lapse from matrimonial fidelity on the part of husband or wife is sufficient to dissolve the marriage. But if the husband, or wife, is sent to penal servitude for life, or becomes a raving lunatic, or runs away to the Antipodes without, so far as can be ascertained, committing an act of adultery, the marriage remains. The Catholic law, as opposed to this, is at least logical, but it involves, in certain cases, immense hardship and cruelty. To the modern man and woman it seems actually immoral to enforce celibacy on a young couple, either, or each, of whom desire to enter upon what, but for the previous mistake, would have been recognized as a clean and honourable union.

The Birth-Control Problem

Birth-control is a problem which is likely to become more acute in the immediate future.

We need not enter into dark calculations as to how soon an increase of the world-population will overtake the available food-supply. That time has not yet come. The world is at present nowhere approaching a state of over-population. There is an appalling over-concentration of population in certain areas, but this difficulty could be solved without any necessary recourse to birth-control.

No, the problem arises on other grounds. One such ground is the fact that in slum areas, among the poorest classes, birth-control of an appalling character is already in practice. The general attitude of religion is to withhold from maternity and welfare centres any teaching as to scientific methods of prevention. And the result is, therefore, to allow the abortions to continue.

There is a more direct conflict on this question, however, between modern society and the Roman Catholic Church. A man and his wife have three or four children. They are both young, their income is small, and they cannot possibly afford to maintain a larger family. They are faced, apart from contraception, with the necessity of refraining from further sexual intercourse. They cannot

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afford to have separate bedrooms, and the continued strain of abstention, living under these conditions, creates actual nervous disorder, particularly in the case of the woman. There is no relief from this, for the "safe-periods" are notoriously uncertain.

The act of child-bearing involves a good deal of physical suffering, and some danger, for the average woman. In most cases her vitality suffers if she becomes the mother of a large family. Frequently her constitution is such that, after two or three confinements, the doctor warns the husband that a further confinement may be a death-sentence. The same alternative then arises.

These are not imaginary instances. They are happening every day. Owing to an article which I wrote touching on this subject, some time ago, I have received scores of letters from people in various parts of the world, describing conditions similar to, and worse than this, and complaining bitterly as to the Catholic attitude in regard to them. "Science apparently provides a remedy," they say, "but the Church forbids us to make use of it."

The modern man and woman can see no moral justification for this deliberate infliction of suffering. It is obviously inconclusive to urge that nature must not be interfered with, for every case of surgical or medical treatment is an interference with nature. It is difficult to maintain that the prevention of life is a sin, because abstention, or intercourse during the "safe" period, is a prevention of life. The same consideration applies to

the morality of sexual intercourse with no intention of procreation. It is quite true that birth-control may be, and is, used for selfish and immoral purposes, such as where a married couple decide to have no children because they prefer a motor-car, or an unmarried couple are encouraged to indulge in fornication because they can escape the penalties of nature. But there is not a single act, or virtue, or remedy which cannot be abused.

It is this simple fact which seems to be forgotten by Catholic apologists when they speak or write on the subject of divorce or birth-control. They point out the evil results of divorce and birth-control, and they are quite right, because the abuse of them is obvious. But this does not meet the problem, because it ignores the opposite evils which often arise where divorce or birth-control are forcibly prevented. The most they can do is to show that the prevention of divorce and birth-control leads to less abuse than their sanction. And that is an opinion which the modern man is not usually prepared to accept.

v

Is the Church a sure Moral Guide?

The ultimate conclusion at which the modern man or woman arrive, as a result of all these considerations, can be quite simply stated.

He finds that in the moral sphere the religious standard, and, in particular, the Catholic law, cuts deeply into the most intimate aspects of his life. It imposes a number of rigid regulations in regard to his married life, regulations which, if observed, would bar out a line of conduct which at present he regards as entirely justifiable. Then he turns to the past moral record of the authority which insists on these obligations, and he considers this past record to be, in many respects, so unsatisfactory that he sees no reason to suppose the authority which insists upon them is not wrong in the present.

The very Church, he says, which forbids me under any circumstances to divorce or to practise birth-control, has encouraged the burning of heretics. She was wrong then. Why should she be right now?

We must not suppose, that because we have concentrated chiefly on the Roman Catholic system, other forms of Christianity escape this criticism. The persecuting crimes of Protestantism, as we have seen, have been just as black as those of the Catholic Church. Protestants have preached a God who predestined millions of human beings to be damned, and they have gloried over the eternal tortures of hell as graphically as any medievalists have described the terrors of purgatory. Moreover, although their rule is less clearly defined, they, as a whole, forbid divorce, and they still maintain a quasi-sabbatarian and puritan code, the breach of which is regarded quite

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as seriously as that of the Catholic prohibitions. Modern society is revolted by much of the past and present puritanic system.

There seems to be an inherent tendency on the part of all organized religion to lay a disproportionate emphasis on the necessity of certain ecclesiastical regulations, rather than to present these laws as merely desirable for disciplinary purposes, or as means to a spiritual end. Corporate religious authority does not say that a man is guilty of sin if he goes to Mass, or Sunday meeting, but occupies his mind with uncharitable thoughts, with the same insistence as it preaches the sin of staying away from church. The ideal which organized religion holds out seems to involve this curious concentration on certain exercises which may be very desirable for some people, but which by no means always lead to good results. Moreover, while many professing and devout Christians are bad, many non-Christians are intensely good. These spiritual exercises are, therefore, not an inevitable means of producing virtue.

If it is urged that religious results must not be judged from the standard of natural virtues because the primary purpose is supernatural, the modern man will reply that the success or failure of a religion must be judged, largely at least, by its visible fruits. He will insist that a life of spiritual devotion is of little value, if the devotee is cruel, or dishonest, or irritable, in his business and domestic concerns. And, while we must agree that the aim of religion is not wholly confined to the moral

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sphere, we must admit that morals are a very large part of its purpose, and that its success or failure must be judged partly from the moral standard.

I have tried to represent the criticisms of the modern man and woman, as I visualize them, without exaggeration. We can now pass from the moral indictment to a consideration of the objections which are raised against the Churches on intellectual grounds.

CHAPTER THREE

MODERN CRITICISM OF THE INTELLECTUAL STANDARD OF CHURCHMEN

I

The Importance of Mind in Religion

It may, perhaps, be well to repeat at the outset that intellectual objections must, of their very nature, be more fundamental than æsthetic, or emotional, or even moral objections. And the explanation of this statement can be given in the form of a simple proposition.

The proposition is this : that the mind is the greatest of all the human faculties, and that it is mind more than anything else which determines the nature of our personality.

There are many implications in this simple proposition, and among these, there are implications which some people do not at all like. Let us first consider why the proposition must be maintained.

We know that man predominates over the animal and vegetable world because of his mind. Physically he is weaker than many of the animals. We know that the achievements of his material civilization, his art, and his science have been due

to his mind. When we picture to ourselves some primitive savage setting out with club in hand, on his daily hunt for food, and then consider the achievements of a Plato or Shakespeare, we can realize the immense difference between these two human extremes. And the difference is entirely a difference of mind.

Perhaps you will argue that the spiritual world is a higher realm than the mental, and that spiritual faculties are greater factors than the intellect. But the mind is the door to that spiritual world. It is the mind which the mystic must use in probing the divine mysteries. It is by the mind that he must climb to more ethereal regions. All spiritual experience must work through a mental agency. In prayer, in meditation, even in revelation, it is the mind which functions. Let us agree, for the moment, whatever our particular views on the subject, as to the reality of the supernatural gift of faith. But it is the mind on which this faith is bestowed, and it is to the mind that the truth is disclosed.

Or you may produce the argument that love, and not intellect, is the highest attribute of man. Yet, in true love, it is mind which is the active factor. We know the difference between love which is merely emotional, and love in which the mind is operative. Where the mind is largely shut out, we call the emotion of love "infatuation," or "sentimentality," and we know that infatuation belongs to a much lower level than intelligent love.

Again, there are people who will rather senten-

tiously quote the advice of Charles Kingsley, "Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever." "Goodness," they will say, "is a nobler virtue than cleverness, if indeed cleverness is a virtue at all."

But goodness must be an intelligent process. A girl, or a boy, or adult, who is merely good because he or she feels like it, is not virtuous. You are not good simply because you do what you cannot help doing. Goodness rather implies a deliberate choice between two courses of action, and it is the mind which makes the choice.

When people resent this proposition as to the superiority of the mind, it is due often to a confusion of their own minds. They think that reason is the only function of intelligence, and they very much distrust the value of cold-blooded reason when everything else is thrown overboard. But reasoning is not the only function of the mind. We must remember that intuition, or intuitional consciousness, is probably a mental process, and a process which is, in some ways, superior to reason. Meditation, concentration, the creation of ideas, imagination, will-power, the highest forms of love, are also functions of the mind.

Again, there is a popular idea that to place a supreme value on the mind is to ignore the value of the emotions. The label "high-brow" often suggests a type of being so engrossed in intellectual pursuits that he ignores those normal human amenities which make life tolerable. But to insist on the supreme value of mind is not to suggest that everything except mind can be cast aside. The

scientist who is so absorbed in his laboratory that he neglects his wife and children is an example of one who has forgotten that there are other faculties besides the mind. Emotions and the physical body have to play their own important parts. The mind is a greater, but it is not the only faculty.

It is, indeed, only by means of the mind that a human being can take intelligent care of his body, and guide his emotions. Behind all action and all feeling lies thought.

Artistic inspiration is equally dependent on the intellect. Any form of art which is unintelligent is bad art.

Is there, then, no salvation but for the "intellectuals"? Such a doctrine is, of course, a travesty of our proposition. We all have minds, we must use them to the best of our ability. It is by this comparative test that we shall be judged. Our mind may represent but five, or one, rather than ten talents. It is the extent to which we use it that matters.

Now if, on these terms, we assent to this proposition, we shall see that there are at least two implications which follow from it.

The first is that the mind will ultimately be the influence which determines human affairs. In other words, it is the thinkers who will gradually influence the non-thinkers and determine the course of human development.

The second is that the fundamental test of the truth of any religion, or of any body of opinion, is on the intellectual sphere. If it is true, it will

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survive the intellectual test ; if it is not true, it will fail. No other test can be substituted.

Those who doubt the first implication should ask themselves once more why man has become lord of the animal kingdom. It is because, when a greater mental force is brought into conflict with a lesser mental force, the greater mental force must always be victorious.

Another proof of the influence of the thinkers over the non-thinkers is that ideas have an enormous influence over action. No social upheaval has ever taken place but as the result of ideas. The causes of the French Revolution are to be traced to the influence of Descartes and Rousseau, the Russian cataclysm to the teaching of Karl Marx. The ideas of the intellectuals of the nineteenth century regarding human progress transformed the attitude of the Victorians from a suspicion of new inventions to a desire to encourage and profit by them. The ideas of the desirability of world-peace govern to-day the trend of all international diplomacy. Ideas are the dominating influence upon behaviour, and the conduct of the majority is therefore determined by the thought of the intelligent minority.

Those who doubt the second implication should ask themselves why every religion has always produced reasons to justify its claims. Every religion appeals to reason. Not without justification has the Church of Rome declared that it is heresy to assert that the existence of God is unprovable by reason. Every religion produces spoken and

written propaganda in its support ; and these appeal deliberately to the reason.

It is true that the human mind is far from infallible. Nevertheless, we all use our minds, that is, our reason or intuition, or both, to determine what is truth and what is error. We have no other faculty to use. We know indeed, that, though our minds are not infallible, our emotions are much more fallible. A man who is led entirely by his emotions is capable of landing himself in the worst extremes of error.

The test of mind does not mean that we must trust to our minds independently of other minds. We have to be taught, and, if we do not learn like parrots, it is our minds which we use in the process of our education.

But we must not forget, in this emphasis upon the value of mind, the fact that religion, and particularly the Catholic Religion, lays chief emphasis upon what it defines as the supernatural elements. Thus, the Catholic will legitimately reply to the modern critics of orthodox morals that the primary object of religion is to produce the supernatural virtues of faith and devotion and piety, and that the moral record in respect to natural virtues is not a fair test to take. Similarly, he will protest against the theory that the natural intelligence of the average Churchman, or the attitude of reasoning men to orthodox doctrine, is relevant to the issue. It is not the reasoning human mind, he will say, but the spiritual soul which must be considered, and therefore it does not matter, even if it is true, that

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religious doctrine makes but a small appeal to human intelligence. The supernatural gift of faith and spiritual experience are the tests of religious truth.

Perhaps I can answer this argument the more readily because I am one who accepts this supernatural claim of religion. And I should reply at once that, wherever the supernatural qualities exist, they must directly affect the natural qualities. If a man is full of supernatural grace, the natural virtues must be stimulated. If a doctrinal system is true and therefore appeals to the spiritual sense, it must be capable of being given an intelligent form which is acceptable to the mind. The natural evidence is therefore some test of the supernatural claim. Spirit and mind are not watertight compartments. What is true must ultimately be capable of appealing to the human intellect, and, if it fails entirely so to appeal, there is some justification for suspecting its integrity.

The intellectual test is indeed a valid test, so far as the human mind is concerned. That is why we have rejected certain superstitions to which primitive generations were subject. Such superstitions have not survived the test of the developing intelligence of the human race. Because they were repellent to natural intelligence, they were necessarily devoid of supernatural reality.

Truth Appeals to Intelligence

We can appreciate, accordingly, why, if there are valid intellectual causes to account for the breakaway of modern society from organized religion, they are the ultimate influences upon the situation. Let us always remember that, though people who think intellectually may be in a minority, their influence and conclusions gradually spread and affect their fellow-men, consciously or unconsciously. I have not the least doubt that the present drift from institutional religion is essentially due to intellectual causes. And, until that fact is frankly recognized, no remedy will be found.

We can consider this criticism under two heads : first, criticism of the personnel of religious bodies, and second, criticism of the doctrines for which these bodies stand. As before, I shall endeavour to identify myself with the modern man, so as directly to represent his impressions.

The intellectual standard of the people who make up a Church is clearly of less importance than that of the doctrines of the Church. But it is of considerable importance. For a good case can be prejudiced by being presented in an unintelligent way, and there is also the implication that if a Church only attracts those whose standard of intelligence is low, the case for which it stands is probably itself intellectually inferior.

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When we speak of the personnel of a Church, we refer primarily to the clergy. Obviously it is they, in this context, who count the most, for they present the case, by preaching or by writing. It is true that among Roman Catholics and Anglo-Catholics the sermon plays a relatively small part. People do not go to Catholic churches to hear sermons, and there has been a tendency, therefore, to say that bad preaching does not matter. But the responsibility cannot be quite so easily avoided. For, since it is through the mind that mankind will ultimately accept or reject a creed, writing and preaching inevitably become predominant factors in the failure or success of a religion. It is by written or spoken instruction that the mind is most directly reached, and an intelligent speaker, with an intelligent case to present, will always, under almost any circumstances, win his converts.

An intellectual sermon or speech is not the same thing as oratory. Plenty of orators are extraordinarily stupid and superficial. The ideas are what matter. And, if a man has a deep mind, he will hold the attention of his hearers, even though he has a halting delivery and an unpleasant voice. If he has something really to say it does not nearly so much matter how he says it.

Do not let us make the mistake of supposing that only "high-brows," or, those whom we sometimes inaccurately describe as "educated" people, will listen to intelligent sermons. People of all kinds appreciate ideas, even if they do not understand them. The power of a working-class or village

congregation or audience to appreciate intelligent ideas is as vastly under-rated as the intelligence of an upper middle-class congregation is over-rated. Many clergymen whom I have known have insisted on the need of not "preaching above the heads" of their people. They have enlarged on the necessity of simplicity, by which they meant fifth-rate ideas. And they have followed out their own advice, often because they had only fifth-rate ideas to give.

While we are speaking of this possible misconception, there are two warnings which should be remembered in regard to the qualities of an intelligent mind.

The first is that simplicity need not mean stupidity. Intelligent ideas can often be put with extreme simplicity. Or, to state this warning in another form, the intelligence of mind must not be confused with academic learning. When the intellectual standard of the clergy is criticized, the reply is often given that there are many scholars of theological repute. But scholarship is not enough. By itself it is intellect half developed. The test of mind is also the power to apply this learning so as to explain it intelligibly to the world. The type of dull student-recluse, who has no contact with everyday problems, is not an example of the highest standard of mind. True mind is never dull. And when we hear some learned preacher, enlarging at tedious length on dogmatic intricacies, but totally unable to make contact with the questions and difficulties which face intelligent society,

it means both that his mind is not big enough to escape from a groove, and that his intellectual powers are so unformed that he cannot make use of his learning.

True mind is never dull. That is why the real "intellectual," whether he be scientist, artist, philosopher or mystic, has always something to say worth hearing, even on subjects which are not "shop." Judged, indeed, by the standard of mind, an academic scholar who cannot apply his learning so as to teach, is probably on a lower mental level than the man who has little learning but possesses intelligent ideas.

The second warning is one which we must remember when we examine the intellectual value of a religion, or a body of opinion, by the mentality of those whom it has enlisted in its defence. For we shall occasionally meet, even where the cause appears to be comparatively weak, with apologists who have entered its ranks precisely because the cause is weak. There is a dangerous attraction to some really intelligent minds to rally to a defective cause. Consciously or unconsciously they appreciate the fact that, because the cause is poor, the mental level of their fellow-adherents will be low, and consequently the stress of intellectual competition will be small. A creed of sounder claims will attract so large a number of intelligent people that it will be difficult for them to attain a prominent position. But in a weak cause even a second-rate intellect will soon rise to the top because the supply of intelligent defence is heavily limited. A clever

mind can discover what are the strongest arguments in the cause it has set out to defend : for a weak cause has probably some justification for its existence. And there is a mischievous pleasure to be derived from juggling with these comparatively stronger arguments and confusing the minds of less able people, who do not see exactly how to answer the special pleading which has been advanced.

You may ask, how, if this is true, it is ever possible to apply the test of personnel to the value of the cause which such persons represent. If, in every religious body, there are able minds which may be there only for perverted reasons, is not this test always misleading ? The answer is that the test of personnel is by no means a perfect test, but that it has a certain use. If the cause is a very bad one, it will probably attract no intelligent minds. If it is moderately weak, it will attract only a handful of intelligent people of the kind we have described. And, if it is strong, it will attract a large number, or even the majority, of intelligent thinkers. For, let us be sure of this: truth may fail to win converts for a while because of prejudice, or tradition, or intellectual pride. But truth and intelligence in the long run are fellows, not enemies. Truth will not call in vain. Whatever the strength of the obstructions and forces it antagonizes, in the end it will prevail. And it is not unfair, therefore, to examine the attitude of intelligent thought towards that which claims to be true, and to observe the kind of mind which is convinced by its appeal.

III

Does Catholicism Appeal to the Intelligence?

The Catholic system—and by that term I refer to both Roman Catholic and Anglo-Catholic—does not place as great a value upon preaching as the Protestant bodies. One reason for this is that the form of Catholic worship is of a much higher artistic standard than the Protestant or the ordinary Anglican service.

The real difference is that the liturgy and ceremonial of the Mass were constructed by profound artists, while the official liturgy of Anglicanism, and the form of Protestant worship, were not.

The Mass is probably the most perfect structure in its liturgical and ceremonial setting, that the human mind has ever been inspired to devise. Not only does the Catholic Religion enlist the arts of music and architecture in its support, but the Mass in itself is an exquisite liturgical framework, planned in perfect stages, which even an artist who does not perceive or accept its spiritual reality must admire.¹ And, although the Communion Office of the Anglican Prayer Book is vastly inferior, from a liturgical standpoint, it has been enriched and amended by Anglo-Catholic interpolations and “irregular” revision, so as to supply the deficiencies.

¹ I am merely considering the form of the Mass, and not its spiritual significance.

Now, it is a great mistake to suppose that an artistic and æsthetic appeal is merely emotional : an artist must use his mind to choose what is artistically superior from bad art. But an artistic appeal invites the emotions. And there is, therefore, an enormous tendency in the Catholic Religion to appeal only on emotional grounds to highly emotional people, and on æsthetic grounds to intelligent artists. The consequence is that, as the emotions are generally impermanent in their loyalty—infatuations and violent antagonisms lose their intensity—people who, when young, have fallen in love emotionally with the Catholic Religion, transfer their affections, after a while, elsewhere ; and those who are intelligently æsthetic, but who have been attracted to Catholicism only on those grounds, admire from a distance, but never become keen or regular adherents.

The Catholic Church has always been aware of the dangers of appealing solely to the emotions. The emotions must be used, but they must not be the solitary foundation—even in the natural, as distinct from the supernatural sphere—on which religion builds. The Catholic Religion relies, therefore, upon a continuous supernatural faith, on an austere discipline, on a definite and unemotional rule of life : while, even in the realm of worship, where the emotions are more directly concerned, it has introduced, particularly of later years, a more severe type of plainsong music, and the vigorous suppression of “fancy” and “pretty ritual.” Yet, in spite of these safeguards, it remains true

that a considerable proportion of Catholics are persons who live much more in their emotions than in their mind.

Clearly, so far as the natural qualities are concerned, the only effectual safeguard against this is to strengthen the intellectual appeal, and, though this appeal is made, as we have agreed, partly through literature, the most prominent method must necessarily be that of the sermon.

It is dangerous to generalize, and I can only record my own personal impressions. But I am bound frankly to testify to the low intellectual standard of the average sermon. The majority of Catholic sermons are dogmatic, and they consist much more of assertion than reasoning. The instructed Catholic in the congregation may feel comfortably confirmed by them in his faith, or may be slightly bored because he feels he knows all about the subject already. But the sympathy of the average outsider, whom it is the aim of most sermons to convince, is so little awakened that the address seems to him to be almost in a foreign tongue.

There are, of course, notable exceptions. The success and influence of good preachers is significant. But, certainly in London, they could be counted on the fingers of one's hand.

To the modern man and woman the mentality of the average Catholic preacher is painfully revealed the moment that he enters the pulpit. It betrays one of the symptoms of small-mindedness, namely, a belief that extreme assertiveness is a

proof of truth. In fact, the appeal made by this very normal type of preacher is not to the intelligence, but to rigidity of conviction. The laity are exhorted not to allow one pin of their faith to become loosened, lest the whole edifice collapse. Doubt is presented, not as a misfortune, but as a sin. We find this symptom almost invariably present where the mind is small and undeveloped. People of this type tend to make the most violent assertions, and refuse even to listen to argument from the opposite side. Their minds are closed against any new ideas. They ignore the fact that other narrow-minded people are equally dogmatic in support of what from a Catholic standpoint is heresy. They forget another fact. It is not true, it is the exact reverse of truth, that strength of assertion means strength of mind. On the contrary, the larger and saner the mind, the less it adopts the dogmatic attitude. It is always prepared to listen to argument and to avoid being influenced by prejudice. The more a man really understands his subject, the less he is inclined to lay down the law. Only in the last resort, where, after painful examination and careful study, he has arrived at what he considers an inevitable conclusion, does he venture to state his position : and then, much more as an individual conviction than as a provocative assertion.

You will reply, if you are a Catholic, or even perhaps if you are not, that the Church exists in order to guide mankind, and that therefore she must be sure of her teaching : and the duty of her

priests, you will say, is to preach with conviction, and not in the form of a half-hearted apology. But, if an intelligent man is convinced, he ought to be able to defend or state his conviction in a manner which will appeal to intelligence. If a doctrine is true, even if it belongs to a metaphysical realm where proof by reason alone is impossible, there must be reasons to suggest its probability. A delphic oracle never has been, and never will be, the method of conveying truth.

The Catholic claims that the truth which he professes comes by revelation. But that is not the issue. The issue is that, once the revelation has come, there must be reasons in support of the revealed truth which can be advanced by the instructor.

There are a considerable number of people, however, who crave for a delphic oracle. They prefer to be told in certain tones what to believe and what to do, even if they are told wrong. Indeed, many of them are persuaded that a Church which never admits that she has been wrong, is more likely to be right than a Church which confesses her mistakes.

And, no doubt, it will be urged that it is much better to satisfy the craving of such people, or, anyhow, to give a rigid rule of faith and practice to simple-minded believers. "Only very intelligent men and women," it will be said, "require intelligent reasons in support of Catholic dogma. The kind of sermon, of which you are complaining, is just what the comparatively unintelligent require."

Intellectually, they are children, and we know that children have to be taught and disciplined, or otherwise they will run wild."

I confess that I mistrust the ethics of this principle, even so far as young children are concerned. I doubt if any education is worth while, if it cannot give its reasons. But let us agree, for the sake of argument, to accept it. To what conclusions does it lead us, applied to Catholicism?

The tendency of the Roman Catholic system does, in the main, suggest an application of this principle. Its exact rules of discipline, its index of books which must not be read, its minute details of things which may and may not be done, its absolute claims upon faith, all this is precisely the attitude which is adopted towards children. Intellectually, therefore, its appeal is directed particularly towards people of lesser intelligence, the kind of people who want a parade-ground religion and who will accept whatever they are told. It is true that simple-minded people must be catered for. But, even if this is the best way of catering for them, what of the others—the others, who, it must be remembered, ultimately control public opinion? Roman Catholicism is dangerously akin to-day to a Church which appeals only to the more primitive minds, to a smattering of those intellectuals who like to defend a case which is violently criticized, and to people who are attracted on artistic and æsthetic grounds. Of these there are a great many intelligent people, who, having arrived at their conclusions emotionally, use their

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reason to excuse the conclusions at which they have arrived. But æsthetic sympathy is not a sound rock on which to rely. Such people tend, as we have seen, to be inconstant in their allegiance. And, even if the door which has admitted them to the Church is a permanent door, it is only open to those who happen to have æsthetic tastes. A Church, whose main appeal was on those grounds, could not claim to be fulfilling its Catholic mission.

You may reply to this, "Well, let the Church look after the simple-minded and leave the intellectuals to go their own way." We are not, however, discussing those who are popularly known as the "intellectuals," so much as people with ordinarily intelligent minds. And, if they are left out, a very large number will be left out. And an increasingly large number, for the level of critical intelligence of this modern age is fast rising. The number of Roman Catholic adherents would, therefore, rapidly decrease, numbering only those in whom the inherited tradition is the strongest influence. And traditions of this sort are not nearly as strong as they were.

The Anglo-Catholic Movement is not in the same position as Roman Catholicism, in this respect. By accident, perhaps, rather than design, it cannot demand the same exactitude of discipline or offer a rule of faith so arbitrarily defined. Spiritual geography places it in a Church where authority is weak. And, though some of its supporters would like to enforce the same rigidity of outlook as that of Roman Catholicism, the fact

remains that there is greater opportunity in this Movement for freedom of thought and experimental development.

IV

Nonconformity and Intelligence

If we now turn to consider the personnel of Protestant Nonconformity, we find an altogether different set of conditions.

English Nonconformity has, at least, one outstanding characteristic. It is strictly a class movement. It draws its members from a certain grade of the lower middle-class, and outside that area it is almost non-existent.

This has affected it in many ways. For example, through its worship, it makes an emotional appeal. But it appeals to emotions which belong to a much lower order of culture than those which Catholicism inspires. Its services are bare and bereft of all ceremonial and liturgical beauty. They are devoid of any æsthetic quality. And consequently you will rarely find an artist attracted to its ranks.

But it appeals to the emotions, for no religion can afford to ignore them. Evangelical Protestantism has always tended to be excessively pietistical, as many of the favourite Evangelical hymns bear witness. Sometimes, in revival meetings, it has descended to orgies of Salvationist

fervour and to methods of conversion which are sheer unrestrained emotionalism. This appeals to people of a very primitive mental standard, people whose taste is not sufficiently developed to revolt against the vulgarity of such proceedings. There is also little trace of mystical significance in Nonconformist worship. Hymns, and anthems, and Bible-reading do not accompany any sacramental act, but are rather ends in themselves, and, as the form of worship, and the emotion it excites, are of an inferior order, the sermon and extempore prayer become a much more prominent feature than is the case in the Catholic system, and on the intellectual standard of the minister, accordingly, almost everything depends. On its intellectual side, Nonconformity suffers from its Calvinistic heritage. Calvinist theology has never been capable of an intellectual appeal : the whole Puritan tradition is far too narrow and severe. It has bred men of strong, though often disagreeable moral calibre, but it is crudely unintellectual. By a strange irony, Protestantism which, at its outset, stood for liberty of conscience and the freedom of private judgment, soon crystallized into a dogmatic code, based on the infallibility of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, and as rigid as the most ultramontane medievalism.

But the modern Nonconformist minister has shaken himself free of a great deal of the Calvinist theology and the Puritan spirit. He is much less sectarian in his outlook than his forbears. He takes a more liberal and generous attitude in regard

to other religious bodies. He tends to develop rather in the modernist direction. Now that the lower middle class has become more educated and critical, Nonconformist sermons are usually intelligent reviews of social and moral problems, and sometimes they reveal a considerable intellectual merit. How far is this later reformation likely to be successful? I confess to some doubt as to its success, because the very abandonment of the old puritanic die-hardism, has robbed Nonconformity of its particular *raison d'être*. It can no longer rely on the strength of fanatical or bigoted sectarian enthusiasm, for the old stalwarts are passing away. In its place, there is nothing very definite on which to rely. A rather hearty form of Evangelicalism is not a solid foundation emotionally or intellectually. To modern men and women hearty pietism is more unpleasant even than gloomy pietism, for heartiness in such company never rings true. The invectives thundered out from the old-fashioned dissenting pulpit against those who incurred the certainty of hell-fire, were at least genuine, and the emotion of fear which they produced on the congregation was certainly real enough.

But this has gone. The class to which it was preached has gone, or, rather, has become too intelligent to tolerate these cruder terrorisms. Nonconformity, in fact, is hampered by the weakness of its theological traditions and by the poverty of its worship. It makes no æsthetic appeal, and intellectually it is not strong enough to supply

these artistic defects. There is no form of religious doctrine from which the modern man and woman are more estranged than the Calvinist assumption of an unmerciful God and a verbally inspired Bible. And consequently Evangelical Protestantism seems to be a dwindling force, for which there is no hope of resurrection unless it constructs for itself an entirely new intellectual attitude. Whether that is possible remains to be seen. But it is difficult to imagine, because Calvinist theology and Puritan morality and Evangelical fervour are precisely the kind of forces which cannot be compromised without making terms with the devil—a devil but for whom Non-conformist Christians would never have been mobilized.

v

Modernism and Intelligence

At first sight it is surprising that the modernist movements have attracted so small a number of people. I am including under that heading the Unitarians, various ethical theistic societies, and what used to be called the Broad Church party in the Church of England.

It is surprising, because, although this type of religion makes no æsthetic appeal, it is usually strong in its intellectual personnel. Its ministers are almost invariably men of a high mental stand-

ard. We are not, of course, involving ourselves, at this point, in any conclusion as to whether extreme liberalism is true or untrue. But the most violent opponent of modernism will agree that its adherents are usually men of ability. The modernist or liberal path offers an intellectual adventure which is attractive only to the more developed type of mind.

But the failure of liberal Christianity to attract more than a handful of clergy or laity is too consistent to be an accident. Unitarianism is one of the smallest of the sects. The Broad Church School has never made a popular appeal, and its missionary achievements in the slums or overseas are negligible.

The explanation, however, is not hard to discover. The type of mind to which Liberal Christianity has a natural affinity is the individualistic mind, namely the type of person who does not desire to ally himself with an organization. And therefore the attempt to present this standpoint institutionally has almost inevitably failed. The attempt is virtually a contradiction in terms, for liberalism preaches the need of independent judgment and then asks those who have become independent to commit themselves to the institutionalism of a corporate group.

Moreover, Liberalism must always labour under the disadvantage of compromise. No two extremes are more difficult to compromise than dogmatic Christianity and free thought. To obtain a foothold which is not always slipping, to

deny certain traditional doctrines and yet to accept others, to be sceptical to a point and yet to hold to certain dogmas, is not an easy task. The Liberal Christian is indeed between two fires. He is regarded by the orthodox as a traitor to the Faith, and he is despised by the Rationalist as dishonest to his convictions. All middle courses are, of course, open to this double antagonism. But in the religious world, between two such extremes as these, the antagonism is relentless.

VI

The Church of England and Intelligence

When we turn to consider the personnel of the Church of England, we are considering the central body of that Church. For we have already glanced at the Anglo-Catholic and Broad Church schools of thought, and the position of the Evangelicals is roughly that of the Nonconformists. The Evangelicals are not confined to a single social class, like the Nonconformists, and they are less crude in their methods. But Evangelicalism seems to be inseparable from a degree of sentimentality, and, similarly, therefore, it appeals almost entirely to people who are more emotionally than intellectually developed. This heavily decreases its influence at the present time, for, as we have seen, there is probably no form of emo-

tionalism which arouses less sympathy in the hearts of modern men and women than pious sentimentality.

We come now, however, to the official Church of England, the moderate or central element, the religion of most of our English cathedrals and parish churches and public schools.

We have remarked already on the steady decline of candidates for Anglican Orders. This decline has caused a distinct deterioration in the quality of the clergy. In older days the English clergyman was always a man of University education, and usually with a fair degree of social and educational culture. The Church of England has produced a number of men of outstanding intellectual ability, and still more men of academic learning, which, however, as we have seen, is not, in itself, a proof of intellect. The average intellectual standard has never been remarkably high—much lower, in fact, than the average mental calibre of such professions as the law or medicine.

But if this was true in the last century, it is doubly true now. The deterioration must not be assigned to the intrusion of men who have had no Varsity career, for the modern ordinands with an Oxford and Cambridge record are of no higher mental value than the non-University candidate. It is due to the fact that the best type of mind is not attracted from any grade of society ; and men, often with quite pleasant social manners, and with, usually, an excellent moral character, but, quite definitely, with smaller minds are the chief candid-

ates. This is true, moreover—always remembering that we are dealing exclusively with averages—of all schools of Anglican Churchmanship.

Central Churchmen often draw a favourable contrast between the sanity and comprehensiveness of their own outlook, and that of the narrower Evangelical or Anglo-Catholic standpoint, which, they say, attracts only the clerical crank. But the moderate clergyman is quite as intellectually inconspicuous, and the term “parsonic,” which is not altogether unfairly applied, denotes just as narrow a mentality as that of the more extreme “party” man : though it is narrowness of a different kind.

Let us leave any consideration as to the causes of this defect until we come to consider the clerical profession as a whole. It applies generally to the clergy or ministers of all organized bodies.

The preaching standard of the ordinary Church of England makes little intellectual appeal, because the preachers are men of no outstanding mental ability. Oratory is a rare gift, and oratory without ideas makes an entirely emotional appeal.

There remains, therefore, the appeal of the service itself. The typical Anglican service is chaste and dignified, but it possesses neither the æsthetic value of Catholic liturgy and ceremonial, nor the emotional fervour of Evangelicalism. The Oxford Movement did a good deal of harm to the Church of England, when it introduced the surpliced choir in the chancels. This has tended to make the Anglican service uncongregational. Nor

have anthems and elaborate settings to the canticles, in places where the choir is of a more ambitious character, compensated for this defect. Anglican music of the definitely choir type has suffered from the tradition of a Stainer-Goss-Smart school of music, which reproduces and perpetuates, on a low artistic level, the cold gloom of Anglican dignity. When Mendelssohn wrote specifically for the Church of England, he subscribed easily enough to this same, soulless dignity. Even Samuel Wesley could not rise above it. And there is a multitude of lesser composition about which the less said the better.

The introduction of the *English Hymnal* has undoubtedly been a reformation, where it has penetrated into moderate churches, and has done more to raise the level of the Anglican service than any other influence of the century.

But the offices of Mattins and Evensong, however much interpolated and brightened—and shortened—are, quite apart from sacramental considerations, a poorer form of worship than the Mass. For the Mass leads up to a climax, a moment of sacrifice and adoration, which has its effect even on the most casual or irreverent congregation. There is no climax of any kind in the ordinary Anglican service.

The Communion Office possesses, of course, a peculiar sacredness, all the more apparent in the normal Anglican church, because it is celebrated only when the more devout worshippers are present. But it suffers, in its outward form,

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because its interpretation is at the mercy of the officiating clergyman. In his desire to be congregational and audible he puts his own expression into the words of the liturgy, often with fatal results. The Communion Service in the moderate or Evangelical church is as dependent on the personality of the clergyman, apart from its sacramental significance, as the sermon or the reading of the Lessons.

Anglican public worship has emotional occasions, such as at a Confirmation, or on the last Sunday of a school term, or in some national bereavement. But such emotions are of a very sentimental order. Anglicanism possesses a simple dignity ; but it fails woefully to rise to any dramatic level. I remember, as a very young man, attending the enthronement ceremony of Dr. Randall Davidson in Canterbury Cathedral. The solemn moment had come, when in that magnificent edifice, in the presence of a crowded congregation, he ascended the steps of St. Augustine's throne and became the Primate of All England. There was a moment of tense silence. One expected a crash of organ chords, or the peal of bells, or the fanfare of trumpets. But, no : incredible as it may appear, the silence was broken by the voice of a minor canon intoning the words "Dearly beloved brethren." We began Morning Prayer.

That kind of incident already belongs rather to the past than the present, for there has been a distinct improvement in the public worship of

many Anglican cathedrals. But one defect remains painfully evident. The average clergyman is untrained ceremonially. He has no ceremonial sense. He is awkward and unacquainted with the first principles of stage-craft. This matters little where there is no attempt at ceremonial effect. But, now that the Catholic Revival has introduced a ceremonial element into many Anglican churches and cathedrals, these minute imperfections have become more conspicuous. And the criticism applies to many of those clergy who would describe themselves at least as "moderate Catholics."

VII

Where Anglicanism Fails

Anyone who doubts that there is some radical defect in ordinary Anglican worship, should turn his attention to the religious appeal of the public-school chapels.

For the Church of England has advantages beyond any other religious bodies. She is in complete control of all the big public schools. She has not lost her hold in that quarter. It is true that, owing to the breakaway from religion, hundreds of boys of the public-school class come to school ignorant even of the fundamental Christian doctrines. But the English Church confirms them, for it is still the custom for all

public-schoolboys to be confirmed, whatever the degree of their parents' indifference to religion. Moreover, day after day, and Sunday after Sunday, she has this rising generation compulsorily gathered together for the purpose of her worship. And yet she does not retain more than a handful of them when they come to riper years.

It would be interesting to compare the results of the Roman Catholic public schools in this respect, over their own community of youth. A certain number of men drift away, but disciplinary ties and hereditary Catholic loyalty are stronger influences than is the case with Anglicanism. Vocations for the Religious Orders and the secular priesthood are frequent, but it is hardly fair to draw conclusions from this, as in the Church of England no such advantage is taken of the impressionable age. And opinions will differ as to whether the Roman Catholic method is good.

The chief difference between the results of the Roman Catholic and ordinary public school systems lies not in the subsequent, but in the immediate effects. On the whole, there can be no doubt that the Roman Catholic religion makes a more vital appeal to boys at school than the Anglican religion. Anglican chapel services never arouse enthusiasm, they result either in complete indifference or in active dislike. I see that Mr. Ernest Raymond even calls public-school religion "soul-murder." That is a strong term. But those who most resent it should remember that, in the case of a majority of boys,

chapel definitely ensures that, the moment they are no longer compelled, they will never go to church again. The public-school religion, however, appeals successfully to one emotion, and that is the emotion of conservative tradition. Chapel is a tradition much more than a religion. And it retains its hold largely because Englishmen are innately conservative.

Why does the Church of England fail so largely in making use of this unique opportunity? A good many reasons may be given, but here are three examples of causes which contribute to the failure. Anglican worship has no æsthetic or dramatic element in it, and there is nothing to excite the interest or the artistic sense. Secondly, it is monotonous. One Sunday, one festival, is just the same as another. There is nothing corresponding to the Catholic genius for creating special associations with special holy days, or with the natural seasons of the year, to which all human sympathy has so close an affinity. In the Catholic Calendar there is the Midnight Mass of Christmas, the Candlemas, the Palm Sunday and Holy Week ceremonies, the Corpus Christi procession, the Requiem of All Souls. Anglicanism has the same service all the year round, but for the hymns and collects. Thirdly, there is no direct contact with the individual in the ordinary Church of England religion. Religion only concerns the schoolboy as one of a congregation. There is nothing to correspond to the system of confession, where he must individually profess his penitence and receive

individual direction. The only single occasion where religion is brought into individual touch with the boy is in preparation for Confirmation, and this is generally carried out in classes—often by housemasters who are as shy of the subject as the pupils themselves.

VIII

The Clerical Mind

There are certain characteristics which seem to belong to the ministers of all religions. They inevitably form a caste which is sharply differentiated from the ordinary body of laity. It is quite false, of course, to suppose that Protestantism or Anglicanism escapes this sacerdotal tendency. It is common in comparative degrees to the clergy of all denominations.

This is not altogether surprising, for the clergy are given, even at the outset of their career, a peculiar responsibility. Their office is sacred. They find themselves, even when they are very young, consulted, and placed in an authoritative position, not only, like schoolmasters, in regard to children, but in their relations with women and young men. In the Catholic Church the office of confessor enormously increases this authoritative status, but, even where confession is not practised, the responsibility arises in other ways. An

attempt has been made by the Church of England and the Protestant bodies to avoid any suspicion of sacerdotalism by abolishing a celibate priesthood and allowing the clergyman to have a home and family like other laymen. But this, again, has not eliminated the sense of caste, and the Nonconformist minister, or the Anglican vicar of some rural village, has as much authority over his congregation as any priest in a Roman Catholic community.

The clergyman is surrounded by his own congregation and his co-religionists, and he is quite definitely cut off from the mass of people outside. His collar is the mark of an impassable barrier. And this has certain curious consequences. The most important of these is that he loses a sense of mental proportion. He never gets away from shop. He is immersed in the domestic concerns of his own denomination. All sorts of sectarian issues begin to assume an extraordinary importance in his mind.

Of course every man and woman talks and thinks shop to some extent. But in most cases they are forced to rub shoulders, and to stand on an equal footing, with people who are uninterested and unimpressed by their professional problems. The clergy, on the contrary, are almost exclusively confined to contact with those who are very much interested and impressed. The most regular members of their congregation are women, and a few men, who have what is known as the "clerical" mind. It is true that the parish priest has his scout troop and his clubs for boys and girls, but

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this association with young life does not provide a sufficiently matured environment to counterbalance the narrower influences. And even when in some hard-worked slum parish, in the confessional, or by informal intercourse, the priest is brought face to face with those who have fallen far from religious standards, he does so in a strictly professional capacity.

Few impressions are more consistent and less contradicted by personal exceptions, so the modern man considers, than this clerical sense of misproportion. The average sermon—and indeed, the average conversation of religious people—seems so amazingly restricted to controversial and doctrinal and denominational issues, which have an importance, but have nothing like the importance which the preacher supposes. The clergy preach and talk about matters which to the average modern man and woman have practically no interest. They are speaking and thinking in a foreign language to the rest of the world—outside their own small clique.

It may be said that doctrinal issues, whatever our views as to the truth of them, are of supreme importance. It matters to every man whether there is a God or not, for if there is not, it is a delusion and a waste of time to worship Him. But it is not the fundamental controversies which normally enter into ecclesiastical shop-talk. Some of my ardent Roman Catholic friends are inordinately interested, it seems to me, in proving that Anglican Orders are invalid, just as there is a type

of Anglo-Catholic clergyman who is absorbed in the legality of Reservation, or the moderate clergyman who is immersed in consideration as to how far other people are disobeying the Prayer Book, and how to brighten up the services so as to increase the size of his congregation. These things have an importance, but the clergy have too little realization that these concerns are technical.

And when they occasionally deal, in sermons or conversation or literature, with the problems which engross the lay world, the same disproportionate taint is evident. They approach them from a strictly denominational angle. They are unable to form an impartial, purely rational conclusion, because they place ecclesiastical considerations first and judge the wider problems in the light of these considerations. I take an extreme example so as to illustrate more clearly the implications of this criticism. I remember being present in a large congregation on the Sunday immediately following the death of Edward VII. The preacher emphasized how great a calamity had befallen the nation, because he urged that the late King would have been singularly capable of guiding the country through the difficult constitutional questions with which it was at that time faced. He asked why God had inflicted this calamity. And his explanation was that the cause was to be found in the national apostacy of the divorce law, and the passing of the Deceased Wife's Sister Act!

The Deceased Wife's Sister! It is necessary, of course, when the question arises, to decide

whether it is right or wrong for a man to marry that unfortunate relative. It matters whether services of Adoration or Benediction should be legalized, whether Anglican Orders are historically fraudulent, whether it is necessary for a man to go to Mattins on Sunday morning, whether a bishop is a heretic, and therefore dishonest in continuing to hold office in his Church. It is only the sillier type of popular journalist who writes articles to say that these things are immaterial. A sense of proportion does not mean that one can afford to leave the smaller issues unsolved. What it means is that, though your particular duty may involve a consideration of lesser questions, you must never forget that they are lesser questions, and you must arrange them in your mind in the order of their value. A man who refuses to decide whether his house wants repainting is a fool. But a man who puts this question in the forefront of his thoughts and conversation has an unbalanced mind.

I do not think that the modern man and woman are altogether unmindful of the noble service and the high moral standard which most of the clergy fulfil and sustain. The less observant sceptic may fail to assign to this example its full value. But the world, as a whole, cannot but be impressed by the unselfish labour which the ministers of all religions perform for a miserably inadequate wage. They bring comfort and sympathy to thousands of the sick and dying, they sacrifice comfort and worldly success to work in the slums or on some distant mission station. Every church of every

denomination is a centre of social activity among the young, with clubs for the older men, and athletics, scouting, dancing, and all sorts of outdoor and indoor recreation for boys and girls. The most intolerant secularist is forced to admit that, if the churches were suddenly to disappear, the social loss, quite apart from any theological consideration, would be incalculable. It is organized religion which has brought happy and healthy influences into the lives of innumerable men and women, and of boys and girls, who live in the slums and poorer areas, and whose existence otherwise would be entirely unrelieved from deadly monotony, from drudgery and squalor, or even from actual want and misery. The Church has provided the one gleam of inspiration, it has stood as the single alternative to the inducements and excitements offered by the lowest forms of vice. And it is the clergy, backed by a small number of indefatigable workers, who have done this. The old days when large numbers of the clergy were idle, wealthy, corrupt and insincere, have passed entirely away. The contemporary record of their service is one which any other profession may well envy.

The modern critic must not be allowed to forget this. He must be reminded that the Church ministers admirably to the less intelligent sections of the population. Where she fails, and where our criticism is directed, is in regard to her relations with more intelligent people.

And there remains this narrowness of outlook,

indeed, of which the modern man is painfully conscious when he comes into contact with the clergy, and with ecclesiastically-minded people. And, lest this criticism should seem to be applied only to orthodox bodies, let me hasten to say that it is even more true of the unorthodox movements. Most Christian Scientists and Spiritualists and Theosophists seem to be quite incapable of avoiding reference to their pet themes for more than ten minutes on end. And as for the Rationalists, or the advocates of "free love," and other controversialists of their kidney, they are unable even to talk about the weather without dragging in a tedious indictment against Christianity.

IX

The Type of Mind which Religion Attracts

You may be prepared to doubt whether bad sermons are important enough to be a real cause of the breach between Church and people.

But the cause is not to be found in the bad sermon : it is to be found in the mental quality of the man who preaches the sermon. When you have realized that, to-day, but for a minority of notable exceptions, the Christian Religion is being presented by men of third-rate intellect, you will have come very near to the direct influences which are turning modern society away from the Church.

A modern man and woman are not likely to go to listen to the exhortations of someone who exhibits all the symptoms of an undeveloped mind.

A distaste for bad sermons is a very superficial and inadequate way of describing the particular cause for the drift from religion which we have been considering. And, if anyone should still think that that is all the modern indictment means, or that, in representing the views of the modern man, I am laying a priggish emphasis upon the value of intellect, it may be well to restate our original proposition in more exact terms.

This is perhaps the clearest form of restatement: An unintelligent sermon is due to unintelligence in the mind of the preacher.

If the average mental standard of the preachers (clergy) is low it means that the religion is attracting to its ministry only the less intelligent grades of the population.

The truth or untruth of a religion is decided primarily by the mind. Truth will not ultimately repel intelligence.

If a religion, therefore, attracts only a lower type of mind, only those people, that is to say, who form their opinions chiefly on emotional grounds, or who are prepared to accept uncritically whatever tradition they have inherited, the religion is either radically untrue, or there is something radically unsound in the way it has been interpreted and presented.

The duty of a Church is to minister to all types of people, and she is justified therefore in appealing

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to the emotions of emotional people, to the æsthetic taste of æsthetic people, and to the simplicity of simple-minded people. But, since mind is the greatest human faculty, and since the ultimate test of truth, for human beings, is made by the mind, it is the presence or absence of intelligent thinkers in a Church which is of vital issue where the test is one of personnel.

And, if I have seemed to exaggerate the position, in trying to voice the criticisms on this score which the modern man and woman bring against institutional religion, I can only plead that I am anxious to make complacent people realize the seriousness of the particular situation. I do not think that I have exaggerated the view of the modern critic. Religion, if it is true, is the most profound of all truths. And, yet, by a strange irony, those who are commissioned to expound it are, for the most part, men of limited intelligence. The most profound subject in the world receives, institutionally, the most superficial treatment. The religious world, which, of its very nature, should stretch unhindered into the realms of infinity, is organically fenced round with heavy walls into the narrowest sectarian compartments. Religion, more than any other cause, should be the most splendid of all intelligent adventures ; yet, in the main, its devotees are those who are most content to graze on the single pasture where they happen to have been placed.

Is Intelligence Condemned by Religion?

That is the indictment, as I understand it, which modern men and women bring against the personnel of the Church.

And, even as I quote, it, I can hear the echo of indignant protest from those who feel themselves to be the victims of such calumny.

“ This is nothing but intellectual pride,” they retort. “ It may be true that the Church ministers to, and is administered by, those who are comparatively less intelligent. It may be true that the intellectuals are outside. But that is their own fault. It is the fault of their pride. Did not our Lord Himself declare that ‘ unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of God ? ’ Did not He thank God that truth was hidden from the wise and revealed to the babes ? And is not that a condemnation of the very attitude which this criticism adopts ? ”

It is indeed a condemnation if we confine our use of the word “ intellectual ” to those who despise the less intelligent, or whose mental snobbery consists of a conviction of their own infallibility. But there is the possibility of a dangerous confusion arising on this score, which we have already mentioned, but which, perhaps, it is well to repeat, since it must enter deeply into our consideration of the main problem.

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The confusion can be described in elementary terms. Simplicity is not the same thing as stupidity. On the contrary, we always find that the more intelligent the mind, the more humble an attitude it takes towards the truth on whose threshold it stands. It is the truly intelligent man who is most aware and most ready to admit the limitations of his knowledge. And it is the less intelligent man who most readily assumes the dogmatic attitude. Narrowness of outlook, fixity of ideas, crystallized conviction that there is no salvation to be found but in his groove or sect, is the mark, not of intellect, but of the undeveloped mind. It is the thinker who is the babe. It is the man who will not use his mind who fancies himself to be wise.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTELLECTUAL OBJECTIONS TO ORTHODOXY

I

Institutionalism Tends to Attract the "Group" Type of Mind

IT is clear, however, that, although there is a certain test provided by considering the type of people who are attracted to a Church, it is not a final test. It is not a final test because, as we saw in the last chapter, it is always possible that a Church has failed to gain the allegiance of more intellectual minds, not because her creed is untrue, but because it has been badly presented.

There is another explanation of the alienation of the intelligent classes which we shall have to consider at a later stage. As we saw, when we glanced at the difficulties of Broad Churchmen, the most developed minds tend to be jealous of their individual freedom. They do not take kindly to organizations, and institutional religion, therefore, will always attract chiefly the "herd" or "group" type of mind—the men and women, that is, who prefer to accept the orthodox conclusions and conventions of the set to which they are allied, rather than to work out their conclusions independently.

The "group" mind is quite inevitably of a lower order than the independent mind. There is no escape, I think, from that verdict, because the urge to mental independence is an inevitable outcome of mental development. Where the mind is content unquestioningly to follow the path laid down by a group of other minds, it means simply a degree of mental inactivity.

Accordingly, there will always be a certain disinclination on the part of intelligent thinkers to commit themselves to an orthodox institutional creed, whether it be religious or political, and the more rigid the institution, the greater will be their disinclination. Even if they were convinced that the Church was completely, or mainly true, in her teaching, they would probably hesitate to commit themselves to the Church because they dislike the institutional system. The test of personnel is insufficient; therefore, so far as their criticism of the Church is concerned, we must go behind this test to the creed itself. The intellectual difficulties, in fact, which modern men and women feel in regard to the tenets of organized Christianity itself, is the final and ultimate cause of the breach between Church and people.

And perhaps it is well to repeat, because it is a consideration which we must never allow ourselves to forget, that, though the intelligent people of any class are in a minority, it is they who ultimately affect the ideas of the majority. Intelligence is eventually the supreme factor in human affairs. The intelligent minority are the key to the situation.

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It is also clear that I cannot enter into a detailed examination of modern objections to the Christian creed. To do so would involve embarking upon a theological treatise which I have neither the capacity nor the desire to undertake. I do not wish to confine myself to the class of people who alone would be prepared to follow such a treatise. My purpose will be served simply by pointing out the tendencies of modern criticism, and by presenting it in an outline form which anyone can appreciate, if he takes the trouble to read.

I shall choose, therefore, four sets of objections, the objections which seem to me the most radical and the most commonly held among modern intelligent men and women. And, as we have followed, so far, the plan of leading from less fundamental to more fundamental issues, I shall choose first the least profound of the four criticisms.

Perhaps it may be well to repeat that in representing these objections and identifying myself with the modern outlook, I am doing so only for the purpose of stating these objections more directly. I am not expressing my own standpoint. My own belief and sympathies will only emerge when, in the later chapters, I attempt to offer a reply and a constructive solution to some of the problems which we are now considering.

The Objection to Dogmatic Authority

The first objection is the same kind of objection which we encountered when we dealt with the moral record of religion. All religious bodies present a series of highly dogmatic statements. These statements are of a nature which cannot be investigated by direct scientific tests. You cannot demonstrate that God exists, or that He is a Trinity, or that He became incarnate, as Einstein demonstrates his theory of relativity. Therefore, if one are to accept these statements as absolute truths, you must accept them, largely on the authority of the Church which makes them. You must be satisfied, so the modern critic contends, that the particular Church or denomination is, in the main, an infallible authority.

We need not waste much time over the probable Protestant retort that this is the Catholic theory, and that the Protestant bodies lay no claim to infallibility. For the difference of claim is really only of degree, and not of kind. Every Christian denomination has certain doctrines to which one must assent as a condition of membership. Indeed, no denomination could otherwise exist organically. All Protestant bodies rest on the infallibility of the Bible, and not only on the infallibility of the Bible, but also upon the comparative infallibility of the particular interpretation of the Bible at which the

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denomination has arrived. For instance, if I were to go to a Wesleyan minister and say that I desired to become, or remain, a Wesleyan Methodist, but that, in reading the New Testament, the Petrine texts had convinced me as to the truth of papal infallibility, he would be bound to reply : “No, you have no right to be a Methodist, for you are accepting an interpretation of these texts which we believe to be wrong. If you are going to join us (or remain with us) you must be prepared to accept our interpretation.”

He would then, no doubt, proceed to appeal to my reason, by argument, and show that the Protestant interpretation of these texts was right. And, in doing so, he would quote the authorities, past or present, who shared his belief as to the true interpretation. And, if he were an intelligent man, he would not pretend that the meaning of such texts is self-evident—for, if so, there would be no conflict of interpretation. Therefore he would rely partly upon the authority of the authorities which he quoted to me.

It is quite correct to maintain that the Catholic claim develops the theory of infallible authority much more fully. The more organized an institution, the more it relies on the corporate authority. But the difference is only comparative. For every consistent Protestant points to the structure of revealed religion, as he holds it, and says, in effect, “My body of faith, my Church, is true. Inquire, examine, read for yourself, but you will find my Church is a reliable guide.”

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In fact, every religious body must appeal, to some extent, to the faith of her members. The creed cannot be proved scientifically, and it cannot become entirely self-evident to the inquirer. A large amount must be accepted on authority.

And at that point the modern man and woman say, "Is yours a reliable authority? You make enormous assumptions, you ask me to accept a great deal on trust. Is your Church—whatever it is—a reliable guide? Let us look into its past record and see."

The historic example, which is always raised when the claims of the Church of Rome are under examination, is that of Galileo. It is always raised because the teaching for which Galileo was condemned by the Church happens to be of a scientific character, and to be demonstrable, therefore, by scientific methods. So completely has science spoken on this question that there is no doubt, and no possibility of any doubt, that Galileo was right and the Church was wrong. That is the popular indictment against the Church of Rome.

Roman Catholics reply to this by pointing out that the Church honoured Nicholas Cusa, who nearly two hundred years before Galileo had advanced the heliocentric theory of astronomy. She similarly honoured Copernicus. The case of Galileo, they say, was aggravated, because he was provocative and dogmatic in his assertions, and because it was he who insisted, when criticism was raised against him, that his case should be tried

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by the Inquisition. His case was tried and his teaching was condemned, a papal decree being issued, ordering him no longer to preach as a demonstrated fact that the earth moved round the sun, such an opinion being contrary to Scripture.

Galileo, no doubt, forced the issue. And it can also be claimed that the Church, while tolerating the less dogmatic opinions of Copernicus, only forbade Galileo to teach the Copernican theory "on account of his pretension of teaching it, not as a mere theory, but as a demonstrated truth, and moreover, as a truth proved from Scripture." (*Catholic Belief*, Di Bruno.)

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Roman Catholic Church, by a papal decree, ordered Galileo only to hold as a pious opinion the Copernican theory. More than this, she forbade him to teach as a proved truth what has since been proved, beyond all doubt, to be true. She may have been justified in condemning Galileo's claim that his teaching was provable from Scripture, but she certainly declared that his teaching was contrary to Scripture. She was wrong on the main issue, and Galileo was right.

A stronger argument on behalf of the Catholic Church is that she is infallible, when she speaks officially in the realm of faith and morals, but fallible where she ventures to make assertions outside that realm, as, for example, in the realm of astronomical science. But this only raises the further question as to who is to decide where the realm of faith and morals begins and ends. In the

Copernican controversy, for instance, the papal decree clearly insinuated that the question of whether the earth moves round the sun, or is stationary, was entirely within the realm of faith. We should have believed so, had we lived in those days, for the Bible definitely implied that the sun moved round the earth. The intelligent man of to-day is confident that the Church has more than once shifted her ground in defining what lies within the jurisdiction of faith, and he considers therefore that on many important issues this distinction is ineffectual.

Another distinction is drawn in the Catholic system between doctrine officially promulgated and what may be described as unofficial doctrines. This distinction is drawn because infallibility is directly claimed only on behalf of the official promulgations. But it is by no means easy to apply this distinction in practice. Roman Catholic theologians differ considerably in their judgment as to what have been infallible papal statements, some claiming that such a declaration as the Bull, declaring Anglican Orders to be invalid, is an infallible utterance, while others consider that no *ex cathedra* utterance on faith or morals has been made since the doctrine of the Papal Infallibility was defined. The doctrines which the Catholic Church through her General Councils has officially declared are more easily distinguishable, although Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Anglicans are not agreed as to which councils were general. And there is room

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for considerable divergence as to what is and what is not the orthodox interpretation of some of the dogmas contained in the official creeds.

But the modern man and woman are not seriously concerned with this distinction. For they see that there must be a large degree of responsibility even for the less official doctrines of the Church. The Church does not say, "Accept the official doctrines which have been revealed to me by the Holy Spirit. But as for my non-official doctrines I take no sort of responsibility." On the contrary, a Catholic is required to believe a great deal of what is technically unofficial doctrine. There is a degree of infallibility claimed for any corporate teaching of the Church. How indeed could it be otherwise? If so sharp a distinction were drawn as to the reliability of official and non-official statements, the Church could hardly fulfil her normal teaching functions. For the Catholic Church claims to be divinely inspired in her general mission to mankind. Allowing for the fads and idiosyncrasies of individual priests or bishops, the Church—any Church, indeed—believes that in the main her corporate decisions, her non-œcumenical Councils, her current as well as her historic teaching, are a true witness.

It is precisely on these grounds that the Protestant Churches must be included with the Catholic Church in the particular criticism which we are now considering. They cannot avoid a common responsibility, however much they disclaim actual infallibility. Their whole case rests, and must

rest, on the assumption that the tenets for which they stand, and the guidance to humanity which they corporately offer, are, if not absolutely immune from the possibility of error, at least fundamentally true. How else could the existence of a Church or denomination be justified ?

Therefore the modern man and woman are applying a relevant test when they say, not only to the Catholic Church, but to all the religious denominations, "What is your record in the past ? Have you proved a reliable guide ? Because, if you have been shown to have taught error once, how can we be satisfied that you are not wrong now ? "

They look at that record, and they are not satisfied. We have spoken already of the condemnation of Galileo, which the Church of Rome has to its account. There is no doubt, however, that Protestantism would similarly have denounced what appeared to be contrary to an infallible Bible, and indeed the astronomer, Kepler, was condemned on exactly the same issue by the Protestant Theological Faculty of Turbingen, and fled —significantly enough—to the Jesuits at Grätz for refuge !

There have been many other issues, however, in which the modern critic will consider traditional Christianity has been proved wrong. There has been verbal inspiration, to which the Church of Rome appears to be as heavily committed¹ as the Protestant bodies. Yet biblical research and

¹ *Vide* the Papal (Leo XIII). Bull, *Providentissimus Deus*, 1893.

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criticism has forced the Protestant to take up an attitude to-day which, a century ago, would have been condemned as ultra-heretical. There has been in most Protestant bodies, as we have seen, a change of heart regarding the dour Calvinist doctrine of predestination, a doctrine which was certainly declared by the older Evangelicals to be true beyond question. The Church of England, in company with other bodies, largely adopted an uncompromising opposition to Darwin and the origin of species, which has since been proved to be quite untenable.

Again, in earlier days, all Christian bodies were committed to a definite conception of a Heaven and Hell geographically situated in space. Science to-day has made such a conception impossible, and religious teaching on this subject has accordingly undergone a complete change. Heaven and hell are no longer places, but states of existence, entirely unrelated to space. There could hardly be a more complete transformation. And this transformation has occurred, not as an inspired revelation from within the Church itself, but as the result of the pressure of secular scientific discovery.

On these, and on other occasions, the Christian bodies have found themselves committed to positions from which they have been forced to retreat. And, therefore, the modern man and woman ask whether they can be sure that other doctrines will not similarly be re-interpreted, and whether the Church which has made previous mistakes, is not making mistakes in regard to her present claims.

All Christian bodies, as we have seen, are to a comparative extent open to this criticism. But the Church of Rome is open, of course, to much more severe criticism. A Church who lays no claims to infallibility, only incurs the suspicion of unreliability when she is forced to own she was wrong. But a Church, who, under certain conditions, claims an absolute infallibility, cannot shift her ground in regard to essentials, without shattering the whole of her claim. The infallibility of Rome inevitably involves her in an unwavering conservatism. And, although the Roman Catholic Church may have committed herself to few official, unalterable decisions, she claims the right, because she is the living voice of God in her corporate, contemporary decisions, continuously to direct the beliefs of her members.

Let us see how this affects her character, by taking the example of two types of man. The first is anxious to use any power he possesses to crush all belief and behaviour with which he does not agree. He suppresses rigidly in his children any tendency to depart from his own standard. He requires absolute obedience to his authority wherever he can enforce it. He refuses to allow that there is any merit in those who go half-way in agreement with his theories, and he stands sternly aloof from any co-operation with them. Where one of his children is of an inquiring and adventurous mind, he does not encourage questions or liberty of investigation ; he demands, on the contrary, unquestioning obedience. He does not

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set a value on the activity of learning and the function of intelligent thinking, as such. Indeed, it is better, in his judgment, for his children to accept his ruling on unintelligent grounds, than to differ from his ruling intelligently.

The other man is equally convinced of the truth of his convictions. But his convictions do not prevent his toleration, and indeed his encouragement of intelligent inquiry. Because he is so convinced, he is prepared to rely on rational persuasion. He prefers that his children should think wrongly, rather than they should not think at all. He has no desire to persecute or suppress those who differ from him. He welcomes any possible co-operation from those who go half-way with him. He freely admits any faults of which he has been guilty, and he is open to be convinced by any new ideas or interpretations, even though he may be obliged to modify or restate his conclusions as a result of them. Because he is convinced of the truth he holds, he is not afraid of criticism or investigation.

Which of these two types represents the higher level of individual mentality? The modern man will answer unhesitatingly that the former is a bigot, and the second is an intelligent being. And he will further declare that the Church of Rome corresponds to the former much more than to the latter example.

He considers, in justification of that opinion, the mentality of Roman Catholicism as revealed by the Papal Bull on Modernism, by its consistent attitude towards all modern critical investigation,

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and by its refusal to cooperate with those Christians who hold at least a part of the Catholic Faith.

Galileo, according to Catholic apologists, as we have seen, was condemned because he insisted on the truth of his assertions. And that is exactly the modern man's complaint—the fact that Rome interferes with the right of a man to insist openly on what he regards to be the truth.

The modern man, as he reads history, sees that the medieval Church, backed by the full weight of the Aristotelian philosophy, had become, in spite of her immense services to mankind, a deterrent to free scientific inquiry. For it was never certain where such inquiries would be held to cross the theological field. Descartes, for example, when he heard of Galileo's condemnation, withdrew the book which he was writing. That the Copernican theory was openly taught by the French clergy is due to Gallican, anti-papal influences, and goes somewhat to confirm the suspicion that the papal authority was the chief enemy of the early scientific revival.

Which is better—freedom of thought, even if the conclusions arrived at are wrong—or acceptance of the truth, without thought? That is the real issue.

If a Church is infallible, if an authority is inspired, it must be an intelligent authority. Intolerance and a desire to suppress liberty of thought are, to the modern mind, proof of a certain absence of intelligence...

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It will again be urged, by those who resent this attitude of modern criticism, that the Church's mission is to teach her children, and that, in order to teach children, she must vigorously protect them from false theories, and must dogmatically teach them the truth. Everything turns, however, on the meaning of the word "dogmatically." Modern educationalists would not at all agree that the right way to train children is to suppress erroneous ideas and to force the truth into their minds by the gentle aid of the cane. The fundamental difference between the old and newer methods of education is that, in the latter, children are encouraged to inquire, and that instead of being arbitrarily compelled to accept the truth, they are shown by convincing reasons why the truth is true. The choice is left largely to them. In fact, whereas formerly they were taught, modern education aims at encouraging children to teach themselves.

As the modern man looks out on the world of organized religion, and on the Roman Catholic Church in particular, he is confirmed in the view that the attitude taken by the Church is very much that of a parent to small children. She insists on obedience to parental discipline, on absolute and unquestioning belief. And, while the modern man is doubtful whether this is the best method of education even for small children, he is certain that intelligent men and women of to-day cannot thus be treated as children. He is not prepared to be treated as a child. He considers that he

and his fellow-men are, indeed, in some respects more intelligent than the teachers.

For the Churches, and, again, the Church of Rome, in particular, appear to him to bear all those traits which we know so well in the conservative-minded and rather bigoted individual. She seems deliberately, even in non-essentials, to lean to the conservative course. Most men, to take a trivial example, recognize that on hygienic grounds cremation is preferable to ordinary interment. There are no rational, as distinct from sentimental, objections to cremation. Yet Rome forbids it. Human intelligence has begun to appreciate that, where it is possible to do so, all traditions and all conduct must be tested on rational grounds, and that critical scientific investigation must be carried out to see whether a rational conclusion as to their value or absence of value is possible. But Rome not only discredits such conclusions : she definitely forbids, so far as she is able, any investigations which attempt to form such conclusions. That is her declared attitude to Modernism—not only that Modernism is wrong in its verdict, but that it is wrong in attempting to try the case so as to arrive at a verdict.

The modern man is not prepared to submit himself to such a guide. And that, I submit, is the sum of his indictment on this score.

III

The Objection to the Sectarian Outlook in Religion

The second objection concerns the sectarian attitude of the Christian bodies.

Christendom presents the spectacle of a number of separate organizations, each disowning the other, and adopting an attitude of either open or implied contempt. In the past this contempt took the form of an uncompromising hostility. Christians have been as vigorous in persecuting and slaughtering brother Christians as in converting pagans. There has been little difference between Catholics and Protestants in this respect. But these manifestations of extreme intolerance belong, on the whole, to a past age. To-day, however strong the temper of intolerance may be in certain cases, it is not openly expressed in the fiery terms which our forefathers employed.

The age of persecution has passed, but the sectarian spirit is by no means extinct. Most Christian bodies regard their own presentation of the Faith as sufficient for the needs of mankind. They see little or no need for the existence of their rivals. They claim to be, if not the only true Church, the truest Church—true enough to be independent of any foreign denominational constitution. Each of them points to rampant error and abuse in the system of their opponents. And, while Roman Catholics are active in their prosely-

tizing propaganda among Protestants, and Anglicans, and Orthodox Catholics, there are Protestant missions whose sole duty is to spread the truth in benighted Papist countries.

But this statement again needs qualification if we are to be strictly accurate in defining the present state of affairs. Among the Nonconformists there is undoubtedly a more generous outlook than heretofore. There is a considerable movement for reunion among the Protestant bodies themselves, and there is a freer recognition of the rights of other Christians to their own existence. Few, if any, Nonconformists would contemplate a reunited Christendom in which Rome had a place, but they are prepared to recognize the service which episcopal Anglicanism has rendered to religion. Roman Catholicism, however, remains, from the very nature of its claims, entirely unable to contemplate any reunion which is not a complete submission. Anglo-Catholics necessarily take a somewhat wider view. They cannot pretend to be the whole Church, and their vision extends to an ultimate unity in which both Rome and the East will play their part. But most Anglo-Catholics probably believe that, in the final triumph of religion, worship and faith will be Catholic in form, as they understand the term "Catholic." To that faith and worship the whole of humanity must ultimately be converted.

The Church of England certainly appears to occupy a different position in this respect. Her outlook is essentially broader because she is the

only religious body which contains within her communion several different religious beliefs. This comprehensiveness necessarily widens her sympathies, and Anglican leaders are fond of describing their Church as a bridge which should be the means of bringing Catholics and Protestants and even Modernists together, since she includes in her own Communion all these religious aspects. Curiously enough, however, the very leaders who have rejoiced in her comprehensiveness in theory are ashamed of it in practice, so far as the Latin wing of the Anglo-Catholic Movement is concerned. They intend to suppress such services as Benediction, because, doctrinally and ceremonially, it comes too near to Roman Catholic practice. In other words they propose to increase the usefulness of their bridge by breaking down one end of it, so as to guarantee that it fails to reach at least one of the banks.

It is equally curious to find that a considerable number of intelligent men, having with one breath denounced the narrowness of the sectarian outlook, and having vehemently protested that not one but many, or all religions, are bright, proceed to criticise the Church of England for possessing the very qualities which they declare elsewhere to be essential. Shortly after the defeat of the 1927 Prayer Book by the House of Commons, I took part in a debate held by a society which is composed of barristers and meets in the Temple. The motion proposed the disestablishment of the Church of England, but its terms were interpreted

widely enough to allow room for a great deal of that vacuous sentiment and rather silly criticism which a religious discussion seems inevitably to invite. One line of argument, however, was distinctly interesting as showing the bent of a certain type of legal mind : several speakers condemned the Church of England as unfit to remain the Established Church of the country because, as they put it, "you never find two Anglican churches teaching the same thing." In other words, the Church ought to be disestablished for being so representative of English religious thought that she included varieties of type instead of being rigidly uniform !

It will be necessary to deal with the question of comprehensiveness when we come to suggest an outline of constructive remedies. So, at the moment, I will merely insist that the religious expression in the Church of England is the very asset which qualifies her for establishment, if you are to preserve such a feature in the Constitution as a State Church. Further, we must remember that though this comprehensiveness has certain advantages, it weakens the power of the Church to speak and act institutionally.

Let us return to the conclusions which the modern man is forming for himself as he looks out on divided Christendom. By this time we shall probably agree that he is justified in regarding it as vitiated by a spirit of sectarianism—that is to say, by its confusions and enmities, and by the multitude of its conflicting claims. The Churches

may not be intolerant to the point of persecution. But there is a great deal of ecclesiastical snobbishness in their outlook, a tendency to ridicule and to despise competitors, and to assume that their particular system is sufficiently perfect to be able to cater for the whole human race, without any assistance from their rivals.

IV

Why the Sectarian Outlook is Unintelligent

I find that few religious people realize how strongly their sectarian attitude persuades the modern man that all Christian Churches are partially wrong.

Even if he had no other objection to make, this would arouse a deep suspicion in his mind. If we see a number of guides calling out to us to follow them, and each of them protesting that theirs is the right path, and that the others are impostors or fools, who will lead us, anyhow partially, astray, our inclination is to take no notice of any of them. The same confusion occurs, to some extent, in modern advertisement, but there is a radical difference, because, for fear of the law of libel, no advertiser dare criticise his rivals.

You may very justly reply that if we refuse to listen to any of the guides, our decision is due to sheer irrational impatience. Because all of them

cannot equally be right, it does not follow that one is not right. Suppose, for example, that the Church of Rome is right. What is she to do, as the complete and only Church of Christ? She must join in the sectarian warfare, so as to protest her monopoly, and to protect honest inquirers from being misled by quacks.

That reply is so reasonable that we must admit the unreasonableness of drawing an absolute conclusion from the sectarian conflict. All that is justified is a suspicion that there is something radically incomplete in the sectarian mentality. For when a Roman Catholic, or an Anglo-Catholic, or an Evangelical, declare : "My religion is the religion for all mankind. In the end you will all come to see that my claims are indisputable," there is a suggestion—though no more than a suggestion—that he has failed to realize that his opponents are just as sincerely convinced as he, and convinced by the same process.

This failure to appreciate the other man's conviction is an important feature in the sectarian outlook. For it definitely reveals an obliquity of mental vision, an intellectual shortsightedness which makes impartial and rational judgment in any controversial issue impossible. We can almost measure the width of an individual mind by the degree to which it is able to comprehend the opponent's standpoint. No issue can be philosophically or judicially considered unless we are able to stand, for a while, at arm's length to ourselves, and regard the problem apart from our

preconceived ideas or prejudices—certainly apart from the prejudices we hold in regard to our apparent opponents.

Unfortunately, many people imagine that they understand their opponent's standpoint, when they are not even trying to understand. In a small book of mine I recently called attention to an example which exactly illustrates this pretension. Mr. Bertrand Russell is discussing Kant,¹ and he has to explain why so great a mind as Kant's could still believe in a God. He declares that this phenomenon was due to the fact that Kant was taught to believe in God at his mother's knee, and because the impressions received during the years of infancy cannot be shaken off. Imagine the giant intellect of Kant, which enabled and compelled him to change some of the most radical of his early ideas, being so completely at the mercy of traditional teaching! Mr. Russell, in fact, is so obsessed with sectarian prejudice on this point as to be unable to see into Kant's mind. He merely offers an explanation in order to satisfy his own irritation that Kant should have believed in God. Like most Rationalists he rationalizes much more than he reasons.

And that is how so many people deceive themselves. They are annoyed that intellectual people reject Protestantism, or Catholicism, or whatever the standpoint may be, and they invent comfortable explanations to quiet their annoyance. Then they

¹ *Why I am not a Christian*, by Bertrand Russell, and my reply: *The Unreasonableness of Anti-Christianity*.

tell us that they have been able to see inside their opponents' mind, and that they can explain the cause of his delusions.

Few people will deny the proposition that the more profound a truth, the more certainly it will possess various aspects—that is to say, it will be capable of being defined and expressed in many different forms, and, indeed, viewed from a multitude of angles. So, since all human minds are limited, it is probable that no one mind will appreciate all the aspects or forms.

There are certain people who become very annoyed when one speaks of "aspects of truth." They will ask how, if this principle is allowed, there can be anything but confusion. How can two contradictory opinions both be true?

But we must not be led into the error of supposing that contradictions are the same as different aspects of the same truth. And there is this to guide us. Aspects of a truth are necessarily constructive and not negative in character. A wise man once said, "All religions are right in what they affirm, and wrong in what they deny." And though that is a crude, so far as it is a very general statement, it contains a profound truth.

A single aspect of a truth may be a very distant and indirect appreciation of the truth. The truest realization of a truth will be that which comprehends the various aspects and does not deny them.

A religion which is sectarian in the sense that it denies the constructive beliefs of other religions is likely, therefore, itself to be incomplete. That is

the objection of the modern man on this score—that the sectarian divisions of Christendom show the incompleteness of each of them. The sectarian mind is not large enough to appreciate that some apparent contradictions are really complementary aspects of the same truth. The truest religion will be that which has the widest vision.

There is one other result of the divisions of Christendom of which we ought to take notice, before we leave the second objection of the modern man behind us.

Divisions breed controversy, and the controversial atmosphere of Christendom has caused that narrowness of outlook, the tendency to attribute an excessive importance to controversial issues, which we have already described as the tendency of the "clerical" mind.

There is little to choose between the various Christian bodies in this aspect. Protestants are probably the worst offenders, although there is a type of enthusiastic Roman Catholic convert who is aggressively protestant in his outlook. Roman Catholic converts and Christian Scientists suffer largely from a "superiority" complex. But there are few "ecclesiastically minded" adherents of any religion who do not manifest this characteristic to some extent.

The other day the Bishop of Birmingham happened to say in an interview that, for various reasons, he was not personally averse to the practice of Communion in One Kind. "But," he added, "it is the Roman practice and therefore

suspect."¹ This is a trivial but characteristic example of the typical ecclesiastic. It shows the evil effects of the sectarian strain in divided Christendom. And this sectarian strain has tended to vitiate, not only the ecclesiastical mind, but the manner in which the various denominational interpretations of Christianity have been presented.

And we must remember, moreover, that as the sectarian circumstances of Christianity have bred the controversial element, so controversy has tended to condition the average clerical outlook on any problem it confronts. For what chiefly vitiates the value of this outlook, in the view of the modern man, is the fact that the ecclesiastic starts out on his consideration of a problem with certain fixed conclusions, namely, those radical tenets which differentiate him from most other religions. His conclusions are not unfettered, he cannot be completely impartial. He invariably forms his opinions in the light of these conclusions, and predetermines these opinions so far as they may conflict or agree with what his religion declares to be essential. The process is, therefore, not that of fearlessly arriving at what he finds, to the best of his capacity, to be the truth. He accepts certain conclusions first, and then fits in his interpretation of a particular truth in the light of these previous conclusions. He does not try the case with an open mind. His mind is already made up on most issues.

¹ Interview with the Bishop of Birmingham in *Men and Movements in the Church*, by the Revd. F.A. Iremonger.

The Objection to the Doctrine of Prayer

We pass into a far deeper realm of thought when we enter upon the third objection of the modern man to the tenets of Christianity.

I do not know that this objection is so often expressed. But it lies, I am convinced, at the root of a great deal of the intelligent intellectual criticism of religion. It is the difficulty of prayer.

It is not the difficulty of the unanswered prayer. That is a problem of a cruder kind. The criticism which we are now considering goes deeper than that. It consists of an inability to believe in a God Who is to any extent swayed by human intercession.

For let us be quite clear as to what appears to the modern man to be involved in the religious practice of prayer. We can dismiss the type of prayer which clearly belongs to an inferior order, such as a request by a betting man that a particular horse may win a race. Most orthodox theologians would agree that intercession for purely material gains are extremely human and natural, but are directed to ends for which prayer is not primarily, if at all, intended.

Yet, though these examples are crude, do they differ in character, or only in degree, from the prayers which the Church officially endorses?

Many of the regular intercessions of the Church are requests for material blessings, for deliverance from physical suffering and disease, for rain or sunshine, for physical safety on a long journey, for military victory in time of war. And, if these sort of prayers are allowable, or indeed desirable, does it not suggest that God is swayed by them? If the course of events is not affected by prayer, if a traveller would reach his destination safely, whether intercession were offered for him or not, then there is no direct need for the intercessions. If the safety of a traveller is due to his friends' prayers, then we have the suggestion of a God Who is at first uncertain as to what His particular purpose will be, and is finally influenced by the weight of human supplication which reaches Him.

There can be little doubt that, in the minds of many Christians, God is so influenced. They remember the promise of Christ that whatsoever shall be asked in His name shall be granted : "Ask and ye shall receive." So they ask both for material and spiritual needs. In a moment of crisis they appeal fervently and continually to God to avert the threatened disaster. If the disaster is averted, their faith is strengthened : if their prayer is unavailing, they are either overcome by religious doubts, or they account for the failure on the ground that their faith was not sufficiently strong to fulfil the required conditions. And behind this is the implication that the Infinite God was persuaded to do as He did according to the

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strength or weakness of the human prayer which was uttered.

It is not my aim in this chapter to offer any solution to this objection. I only wish to emphasize the difficulty which the modern man feels as to the theory of Christian prayer, and the imperfect conception of God which it appears to him to imply. For suppose there is a vacancy in a city office, and that the two competitors for the vacancy are both earnest Christians. Let us suppose, further, that this promotion is so important that it determines the success or failure of the future careers of the applicants. Both men pray earnestly, and perhaps obtain the prayers of their friends and relations. We need not enter into the question as to whether the human factor which determines the choice is influenced by Providence, whether the business directors are inspired directly by God to appoint the man who He determines shall be successful, so that their own free-will is overruled. We are only considering the effect of prayer, and we are forced to realize that one set of intercessions is bound to fail. Is the failure due to the fact that the unsuccessful intercessions are less vigorous?

In a war we have precisely this set of conditions. In the late war Catholics and Protestants seemed to the modern man to be praying that the prayers of their fellow-Catholics or Protestants might be unavailing.

The suggestion that God will be influenced by human prayer in determining the course of human

events, becomes dangerous in its practical results, when it is put, in a popular manner, to the test. For unworthy or trivial prayers often appear to be granted, in the sense at least that events turn out as the supplicants desire : whereas intense prayer, reinforced perhaps by the prayers of a whole congregation or Church, is unavailing. A man loses an important letter and prays to God—or, if he is a Roman Catholic, perhaps to St. Anthony—and finds it. Another man, kneeling by the sick-bed of an only child, beseeches God to save his child from the agonies of disease and the tragedy of death. Yet the document may be found, whereas the child dies. It cannot be said, on the whole—so the modern man concludes—that there is any indication of an intelligent system in the results of prayer.

The test of prayer by its results is, of course, unsatisfactory because we know so little of the divine machinery of the universe. But the objection is fundamental, at least, so far as it insists that there is an imperfection and weakness in God if He is influenced in His purpose by the force of prayer, or if He is only induced to alter the course of events because He is specially requested to do so, and if it raises the suggestion of magic in the effect of prayer upon the course of those events.

The Objection to Miracles

So, finally, we come to the basis of all modern intellectual objection to Christianity—the root reason which has estranged the hyper-intelligent minority and has spread its influence over the more averagely intelligent majority.

It is the suspicion or conviction, as the case may be, that religion is entirely or partially a superstition, an assertion of certain claims and affirmations for which there is no evidence, and many of which, at least, bear the mark of human credulity and invention.

We know, for example, that primitive man attributed the sound of thunder to the voice of an angry God. The more terrifying phenomenon, for which he could not account, was explained by him as a supernatural manifestation—the solar eclipse, the earthquake, the hurricane were due to the action of a generally malevolent deity. All the phenomena which he observed tended to be personified by his child-mind. Just as children see fairies in the shadows, so the ancients saw spiritual beings in the stars, and localized their gods on the summit of the high mountains. Gradually, one by one, these superstitions have been replaced by natural causes. We know that there are natural causes for the thunder, and why, and even when, the eclipse will take place. There

are many phenomena which we can as yet but partially explain, or the causes of which remain completely unknown. But we attribute the earthquake to a geological and not a supernatural convulsion, and we can regard the hurricane rationally rather than superstitiously. Will not, therefore, the same process be continued, and the whole supernatural claim of religion crumble before the spread of scientific explanation ?

For, even in so enlightened a religion as modern Christianity, there are natural phenomena which men still attribute wholly to supernatural causes. A plague, or a war, or drought, or floods, even though we so far attribute them to natural causes as to attempt to prevent or alleviate them in the future by natural means, are regarded as events which call for religious prayer. Religious people still say that a pestilence or famine is a judgment of God and demands a day of national repentance. Is not this a mere perpetuation of the primitive instinct to apply everything which overwhelms us to a divine origin ?

More particularly, the Christian creed involves belief in a number of miraculous events which are directly contrary to normal experience. God became incarnate in a single human personality, He was born miraculously of a Virgin. He cured blindness and other diseases by an instantaneous act, He brought dead men to life, He fed a multitude with a few loaves and fishes, He Himself rose from the grave, and He gave His disciples a supernormal gift of tongues. The Catholic logically

continues the miraculous element, for he claims that in the Mass God becomes specially present under the forms of bread and wine.

I do not think that the reasonable type of modern critic is prepared to adopt a definitely dogmatic attitude and to assert that these events did not happen. He is, however, rationally sceptical. It is not simply that those claims run counter to human experience and scientific history : what confirms his suspicion is that the same type of miraculous story accompanies the record of all religions, of those religions, that is, which are regarded by Christians themselves as belonging to a low level of magical superstition. He cannot trace any difference in kind between pagan magic and Christian miracles, and he is led to assume, therefore, that the same pious credulity, the same tendency to embroider the original record, is at work in the Scriptures and the subsequent Christian tradition, as constitutes the body of pagan belief. He is prepared only to reassemble the Christian Religion shorn of these suspicious resemblances. Christ, therefore, becomes a human being, of peculiarly pure and noble character, a Teacher who is inspired by a divine nature, an incarnation of the divine life, but only in degree distinguishable from the inspiration of other religious teachers and great men. The Virgin Birth becomes a legend which is capable only of a symbolic meaning. The miracles of healing may in some instances escape rejection as being due to an exceptional power of suggestion. The

Resurrection is of a purely spiritual order, and the scriptural account is to be interpreted as, in part at least, the creation of pious but uncritical believers. The reasonable modern man does not desire to press too largely on an absolute rejection of the orthodox claim. He is merely agnostic, just as he is agnostic as to the survival of individual existence beyond the grave. But he is not prepared to give his assent without direct evidence, and he views with distinct suspicion such scriptural evidence as is given, and still more as it is interpreted, by the Christian Churches.

It may be urged that the modern man, if this description of his attitude is direct, is therefore a Modernist. But I imagine that the breach goes deeper than that. All Modernists whom I have known, and whose utterances I read, retain some part at least of the Christian miraculous tradition. The Modernist compromises too much to be wholly sympathetic to the modern standpoint. He is more Christian than most orthodox anti-modernists would agree, too Christian, indeed, to be identified with the modern thinker. The breach goes deeper than that.

And, unless religious people realize the depth of the breach, there is no hope of taking an accurate survey of the situation. I cannot emphasize strongly enough my own conviction that the fundamental cause of the drift from Christian institutionalism is a definitely intellectual drift. It is pathetically short-sighted to assume that the modern man or woman does not go to church or

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belong to any Christian body, because of a lazy indifference, or a loss of spiritual appreciation. His rejection of orthodox Christianity is due to no superficial causes. Nor is it true that he is blinded by intellectual pride, or bereft of intellectual intelligence. To describe him as such is grossly to underrate, and indeed totally to misconceive his intellectual ability. It is because he is intelligent, not because he is unintelligent, that he has broken away. For, once again, I must insist that we are considering the intelligent modern man, who is the key to the whole of the modern position. And there was never a time when intelligent men were more intelligent, more sanely balanced in their judgment, or less prejudiced by traditions which they have accepted on a non-rational basis. Christian institutionalism is largely failing because it does not realize how honestly critical and how sincerely intelligent the modern age is. The significance of the present situation is that religion tends to rely on arguments and methods which were convincing to a less critical generation, but are useless in a time when men and women require some sort of intelligent demonstration before they will give their assent.

Perhaps this is a convenient moment to reaffirm that the modern man is as far from the Rationalism of the Rationalists and the secularist Freethinkers as from orthodox Christians. Never was an age further removed from the atheism of the anti-religious press. These organs and their organizations represent a small clique of bigoted sectarians

who can never talk or write for ten minutes on end without introducing a gibe against Christianity. They can never speak or write of Christianity without losing their tempers. Even great men like Mr. Bertrand Russell become singularly unconvincing, as I have tried to show elsewhere, when they embark on their pet controversy. The modern man is as little tempted to join their ranks as to become a Roman Catholic or a Strict Baptist. He is perfectly prepared to be convinced : they are not. He is able to appreciate the noble aspect of Christianity : they are not. He is deeply interested in the endeavour to discover whether the Christian Religion is wholly true, partially true, or completely untrue : they are not. And, moreover, he is sufficiently intelligent to be unprejudiced : and they are not. The so-called Rationalist Movement is an example of those curious little reactions which occur through all history, and which are invariably characterized by bitter bigotry and incapacity to form a balanced judgment. Such movements make little contribution to history. The Rationalists are never likely to grow in number. And it is doubtful whether they will ever become rational.

CHAPTER FIVE

IS THE MATERIALIST THEORY TENABLE?

I

The Value of Sceptical Criticism to Religion

THERE are several ways in which I could approach the constructive outline which I have set myself to draw. So far, I have endeavoured to represent the critical, destructive objections of the modern man, and only to allow my own ideas to obtrude where I have more particularly agreed or disagreed with him. I might, therefore, reverse the process and make my constructive outline an entirely personal confession of faith. Or I might attempt to prophesy how this body of modern criticism would affect, or fail to affect, the Christian Church of the future. The outline could, in fact, take a form of a direct *credo*, without any attempt to see how far modern difficulties could be met and readjusted : or it could be a deliberate effort to discover a possible compromise, an endeavour to build a bridge, at all costs, across the gulf, before it has widened any further. Neither of these methods is completely satisfactory.

Neither of them is satisfactory, but it is worth noticing that they represent two opposite tenen-

cies which are evident at present in the attitude of organized Christianity. It is uncertain which will prevail as the orthodox policy. I have already suggested that the majority of orthodox Christians probably fail to realize how rapidly the breach between Church and people is widening, or how fundamental are the causes of the breach. The mass of Church people are complacent, and that is why I have written this book. But, when, and so far as, they realize the position, they adopt one of two attitudes. The first attitude is that of building sandbags round the defences so as to make any contact between the Faith and modern criticism even more remote : the other is to start building a bridge, even if it never reaches the other side, and ends in mid-air.

As far as I dare to prophesy, both these two attitudes will remain and will constitute a more fundamental division of Christianity even than Catholicism and Protestantism. The first, or conservative attitude, has no qualms as to the future. If the modern man will not submit to orthodox dogmas, so much the worse for him. The only readjustment the conservative is going to make is to bolt the door, and close any possible lines of approach, even more securely. The modern man must come to the Church, if at all, cap in hand, and humbly beg admittance on any terms. The conservative orthodox mind seems to delight to represent the Christian Religion in terms which maximise the difficulties of the modern man whenever he attempts to approach the Church.

Any explanation which suggests an overture to modern difficulties is suspected at once as being modernist and heretical. The conservative type of mind places all the emphasis on the virtue of faith. The duty of everyone is to believe implicitly, and it is inherently wrong to question or examine this belief. Stubbornness of conviction, refusal to budge an inch, continual reaffirmation of an unalterable creed—these are the mental attitudes which conservatism regards as symptoms of a really sound intelligence. The motto which it places over its portals might be described as “Take it or leave it.” However many more people drift away from the Church, the gates of hell will not prevail. And, even if hell were to prevail, it would be better to perish heroically without abandoning one iota of the creed, than to surrender any of the claims and make terms with the enemy.

It is unnecessary to consider this attitude of mind further, because it has obviously no new contribution to make to the present or future situation. For stubbornness of conviction and unquestioning credulity is not a supreme act of will, and does not require any degree of intelligence. On the contrary, stupid people fall in very easily with these requirements. It is absurdly easy to make oneself believe, and to cling obstinately to that belief. It is easy because it is not infrequently due to mental laziness. The only type of mind which finds it difficult is the type of mind which is sufficiently intelligent to dislike laziness. Nor is a stolid

conviction any guarantee of truth. Men can firmly believe, and have firmly believed in the most obvious forms of error.

We must always remember that what is sometimes called spiritual experience, and sometimes supernatural revelation, and sometimes intuition, is quite distinct from stubborn conservative conviction—about which there is nothing whatever supernatural. Unfortunately, these two mental attitudes appear outwardly to be much the same—so much the same, in fact, that many who believe what they are told merely because they have never taken the trouble to doubt, have deluded themselves and other people into supposing that their immovable ideas are a form of spiritual experience. Though they are fundamentally different, they are difficult superficially to distinguish. All we can say is that the genuine mystic is not usually assertive or intolerant. He knows that he possesses a spiritual clairvoyance, and he respects the fact that other people have not this gift.

The conservative is more common a type than the mystic. And all we need to do is to remember that his type of mind will probably persist and that the conservative type of religion must remain to satisfy it. Roman Catholicism will continue to provide the most consistent environment for this kind of religion, because it presents a logical scheme of autocratic authority. And its influence will be valuable so far as it counterbalances the opposite extremes and tendencies.

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For, as we shall see presently, there is a need for faith and authority in any coherent liberal system. Liberal modernism is always liable to try first to cater for the modern man, and as a result of that attempt, to decide what are its convictions. But compromise is only possible when you include in your possessions something which you cannot surrender. The true process is, therefore, first to examine and construct your own convictions, quite irrespectively of whether the modern man agrees or not ; and only then to see whether any bridge can be built across the gulf. The truth is what matters. The bridge is of no value unless there is truth at least on one side of the gulf.

It may seem that, by devoting so much of this book to an examination of modern criticism, I have been guilty of precisely the same error. There is much in modern criticism which may be unsound, and there is much which is certainly impermanent and likely to be abandoned in a future age. But the examination of criticism has value quite apart from a desire to discover if there is any means of reconciliation between Church and people. Even if there is no such means, modern criticism should have an extremely beneficial influence upon the Church. Unless we are prepared to say that modern criticism is unintelligent, it must have, at the very least, an influence in purifying the faith of the Church. Truth benefits from intelligent criticism ; it is only error which is justified in being afraid. Very often in the history of religion

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it has been the presence of hostile criticism which has brought about internal reformation and purification from abuses.

It is this phenomenon of perpetual religious reformation which reveals the vital fallacy in the Rationalist argument. The Rationalist draws the superficial conclusion that the process of external critical pressure upon religion, and the consequent reformation of the Church, is a proof that religion is being forced, ditch by ditch, to retire, until nothing is left but a complete agnostic secularism. I do not read history in that way. The conclusion, on the contrary, seems to me that there is something inherent and permanent in religion which is capable of being continually reformed and re-expressed, and of benefiting from sceptical criticism. But that opinion I must presently attempt to justify in my own way.

II

Is Faith of more value than Knowledge ?

I wish to make it clear, then, that I am not setting out to draw this constructive outline primarily in order to reconcile my own beliefs with those of the modern man. If that happens at all, it will be a secondary result. My aim is simply to see how far modern criticism helps me to place my own beliefs on a surer footing, to dis-

card what is impermanent and untenable, and to discover a reliable foundation.

It will be easiest, I think, to follow the particular criticisms which have been raised in the previous chapters, remembering that we do so in order to construct, rather than to conciliate, to use rational objections to clear out whatever débris may be clogging the machinery, rather than to see how far a constructive religious belief can be compromised.

And it will certainly be more convenient to approach these criticisms in the reverse order, beginning with the most fundamental, and working back to the least radical.

We shall first, then, consider how far the miraculous element in Christianity is tenable. But, before we do so, we must realize what is the real difficulty which religion has to face to-day in securing the consent of intelligent allegiance to its claims. In former ages intelligent men argued largely by conceptions. They were convinced by the logic of theories. "There must be," they said, for example, "an Infinite Goodness from which we draw the conception of relative goodness. There must be a Designer if there is a design." But to-day conviction requires the burden of experiment. There must be definite demonstration. Otherwise men refuse to commit themselves to positive belief.

Is this a more or less reasonable attitude? In one sense at least, we cannot deny—much as people may dislike the conclusion—that it comes

as a result of a more intelligent standard of mind. Theoretical proof is less sure than physical proof. The eye, said an old Greek philosopher, provides better evidence than the ear. If we see a man cross the road we *know* that he has done so more certainly than if it is represented to us by argument that he must have done so. There is less room for error in the evidence of the senses than in the process of theoretical reasoning. We have entered upon an age in which science has a freer hand than ever before, and the standard of proof required is therefore higher. This does not, however, involve a denial of what remains unproved, the attitude of science in such cases being merely agnostic—ready to be convinced, but not convinced until the demonstration has been proved beyond all question.

If we deny that demonstration is a higher standard of proof, we are virtually saying that knowledge is less certain than faith. And this opens up the difficult question of the value of faith. There is virtually no room for religious faith in the modern man's conception. His position is that of St. Thomas, who said, when told by the other disciples of the Resurrection, " Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, I will not believe."

The words spoken to St. Thomas by Christ are generally taken by Christians to show that faith is of greater value than demonstration. " Because thou hast seen me," He said, " thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have

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believed." And this certainly appears to be a direct condemnation of the modern attitude. But there is an incident in this story which has a certain significance, namely, that Thomas was directly invited to "reach hither his finger," and that, on a previous occasion, the disciples were similarly invited : "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself : handle me and see." Proof by the physical senses was encouraged rather than refused, even though this demonstration was necessary because of the weakness of the perceptions of the disciples, and though St. Thomas was directly rebuked for his unbelief.

Nevertheless, it is the faith of "those who have not seen and yet have believed" which received the praise of our Lord, and it appears at first sight that there is a direct conflict of values between the Christian who places faith on a higher level than knowledge by evidence, and the modern man who refuses to form any conclusions without evidence. We have, therefore, to face the difficult question of faith. It is a difficult question, mainly because the word has been used to cover a number of different processes. I doubt whether there is any subject on which the average person is so confused and uncertain as in regard to what he means by faith.

It is obvious that the most ardent sceptic introduces faith very largely into the practical conduct of his daily life. Life would be intolerable without faith. If we did not have faith that

the cook was not about to poison us, or the bank to defraud us, or the omnibus driver to injure us through bad driving, most of our normal activities would be paralysed. We are forced to assume a certain sanity and honesty and efficiency in our fellow-beings, and we act on the faith that they possess these qualities.

This is faith of a very elementary order, a mere assumption on our part which we adopt for our own convenience. But we encounter a deeper degree of faith, which will equally be admitted by the sceptic as necessary, when we consider the faith which we deliberately extend to certain people in certain extraordinary circumstances. We may have faith in the skill of a surgeon, in the ability of a leader, or in the accuracy of a scientist. And no one will doubt the value of such a faith—provided it is not misdirected—both to ourselves and even indirectly to those in whom we place it.

This kind of faith applies to ourselves, and it is difficult to set a limit to its practical value. For it is through this faith that men can move mountains. The power of will and auto-suggestion, which is dependent on faith, stretches across the borders of an unknown country, for no one, I imagine, would care to say where the effect of suggestion ends, either in physical or psychic phenomena. Certainly we know that without a degree of faith a man can have little initiative or perseverance. The man who has no faith in himself will not succeed, and the man who has

faith that he will come unscathed, even through the horrors of battle, is often the survivor.

There is also the supernatural or spiritual type of faith with which the sceptic will not agree. It is on this that religion places the highest value, for it is a faith which claims to penetrate even further than the natural types of faith which we have considered.

But in regard to this, and indeed to all sorts of faith, there are two common confusions of thought. The first confusion is due to a failure to appreciate that faith, even supernatural faith, is of less value than knowledge. Religious people often appear to deny this statement. Yet there can be no serious question that faith is of value only as a substitute for knowledge, where knowledge is unobtainable. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed," refers to the superior quality of faith as a test of the personal attitude, but it must not be interpreted to mean that faith in itself, as apart from the opportunities to the believer which it offers, is more blessed than knowledge. The disciples who had seen our Lord on Easter Day were not less fortunate than St. Thomas, who had not seen Him. In Christian theology heaven is represented as a condition in which knowledge will have replaced faith, and there is no justification, on the most orthodox grounds, for denying that faith is in itself of less value than knowledge, whatever is the value of faith, for disciplinary purposes, as regards the believer himself.

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The modern attitude is therefore quite legitimate in its insistence upon the desirability of knowledge where knowledge can be obtained. The criticism which it arouses concerns the infinite number of cases where knowledge is unobtainable—infinite, indeed, since there is no such thing as absolute knowledge. What we describe as knowledge requires an element of faith in our senses and intelligence, since these faculties may be at fault.

The second confusion largely explains, I think, the modern suspicion as to the value of faith. It is the confusion which arises through people mistaking credulity for faith. If it were the duty of St. Thomas to believe anything he was told, he would have been compelled to believe the story of the Jews—which was already current during Easter week—that the empty tomb was due to the disciples, who had stolen the body of Christ and hidden it away. If faith meant the duty of believing anything you were told, it would be necessary to believe every impostor and quack who imposed himself upon you.

It is obvious that in all the forms of faith which we have considered, the essential element is a basis of reasonable experience. Faith would be a vice rather than a virtue if we believed in ourselves or in other people for no reasonable cause. We have faith in our cook because we know that sensible cooks do not deliberately attempt to poison us. We have faith in a surgeon, because we have evidence of his skill. We believe in an authority,

or we ought to do so, only because we have grounds for knowing that it has proved reliable in the past. We have faith in ourselves only because of, at least, a subconscious realization that our powers of will are capable of amazing extension. Faith is therefore essentially based on knowledge and experience. Without such a basis it is mere credulity.

This is equally true of spiritual faith. There is no guarantee that it is not delusion, unless it is built on a foundation of spiritual knowledge, either as regards an objective authority, or as regards our own subjective experience. There can be, so far as I see, no escape from this conclusion, and it is the misfortune of religion that its adherents too often talk of faith in a manner which suggests that this groundwork of experience is unnecessary. It is, on the contrary, so essential that the value of the faith depends wholly on the value of the knowledge or experience of which it is an extension. The faith of a savage in an idol is comparatively worthless, simply because the experience of the magic works of the idol is a delusion.

The modern man is, therefore, quite right to doubt my faith in religion if he doubts the trustworthiness of the spiritual experience which I believe I possess. We agree in principle, and we disagree only in the application of the principle. If my experience is false, my faith is false. There is one further consideration. If faith, even spiritual faith, is an extension of reasonable experience and knowledge, then this basis, being

reasonable, is capable of being expressed in an intelligent form. If I believe, I ought to be able to give intelligent reasons why I believe. My experience may be so subjective that it cannot be convincing evidence to any other person except myself : nevertheless, it is capable, to some extent, of being described in intelligent form to other people. It is this fact which lies at the root of the whole of the case I am trying to present. Religion must not avoid modern criticism by escaping into a region where criticism and inquiry cannot follow. If the ultimate extensions of faith cannot be subjected to intelligent inquiry, at least the foundation rests on ground on which the search-light of criticism can legitimately and effectively be turned. That is why I have insisted on the value of the intellectual test. The mind can examine the basis of the faith. Religion stretches, it is true, into the heavens. But unless it is built securely on a rock, it will not survive. It is the foundations which the human mind can, and must examine.

III

Is there a Reality behind Matter ?

The miraculous element in Christianity must be tested largely by considering whether there is sufficient evidence to justify a conviction or a belief in a spiritual or super-physical world.

Even if we proved beyond all doubt the existence of such a world it would not, of course, follow that the Christian miracles were true. But, if the existence of a super-material world were shown to be certain or probable, it would make this particular Christian claim more tenable.

The first impression which in this personal apologia I must record is that of the extreme improbability of the materialist case. If there is one thing which we know about the universe it is that of its immense proportions, or even perhaps of its infinity. Solar systems are multiplied to an extent which passes beyond our comprehension, and the tendency towards infinite conditions of life is seen also in the opposite direction, that is, in the division of the atom into myriads of electrons. The tendency seems to be that of infinite variety, and of extension without limits, rather than of a single system. At the outset, therefore, I am inclined to regard as unlikely the theory that the visible world or universe is the only set of actual conditions.

It is the mind which seems to invite the more immediate test as to whether materialism is true or false. If materialism is true then our consciousness of will, our thought, and all the mental energy of which we are capable, is the result merely of chemical activity in the brain. We are no more than machines. Our highest intelligence is nothing but a mechanical process. The behaviourist school, realizing the tendency of the new psychology to unseat materialism on scientific

grounds, has appreciated the issue and has accordingly introduced materialist principles into the psychological field.

Is the function of the brain a cause, or a result, of will and thought? That is a profound issue, and the experiment carried out by Harvey Cushion in America has therefore a peculiar relevance. A patient, under unique circumstances, had his brain partially exposed, although he was fully conscious. Harvey Cushion applied electric stimulation to that part of the brain from which the volitional movement is directed. Everyone knows the difference between volitional and automatic action, but not everyone knows that the exact point in the brain where each of these movements is localized, has been identified. The electric stimulus was applied to the volitional region. The result is interesting, for, on the materialist theory, the patient ought to have imagined that he moved his limb because he wished to do so. If will is the result of certain chemical activity, here was precisely that activity in operation to cause the consciousness of will. But the patient thought nothing of the sort. He was conscious only of automatic action. Although carried out under the most careful tests, the will was not created by the requisite brain-machinery.

This seems to me to cast a good deal of suspicion on the materialist theory. Telepathic phenomenon also has some significance. There is little doubt that we now have sufficient evidence to claim that thought can be conveyed from one

mind to another, sometimes over an immense distance. The laws which govern this thought transference are as yet unknown, but we know that no physical activity, other than the action of the brain, sends this thought forward on its journey. It is not as in sound or in sight, where the vibrations are caused by a physical act. If will and thought are not the result of mechanical action, we are coming near at least to the border-land of a super-physical phenomenon in the transference of unspoken thought. I do not claim that telepathy proves as much as some enthusiasts suppose. The brain activity, whether it is the cause or result of thought, is itself physical, and may set in motion physical vibrations which travel to the brain of another person. But the phenomenon suggests such an extension of material energy that it may well provide the evidence that thought is super-physical in nature.

Some years ago I began to notice how regularly various sets of conditions, which affected both my physical and my mental life, occurred in periods. Not only would certain days be consistently fortunate or unfortunate, but over a number of weeks I seemed to observe a single class of influences playing consistently upon me and affecting both my own personality and the relations of other people to me. For a month or so I would find that, whatever I did, I was obstructed in turning my energies to account. Publishers, for instance, would turn down my MSS.; or my domestic concerns, not in one but in many separate ways,

would present various anxieties : or a whole set of activities would bring me into comparative prominence : or unexpected upheavals would occur in all directions, in the same continuous manner, for a period. Now, to take one of these examples, my failure or success with publishers was not due merely to the quality of the MSS. ; the cause was not the energy or lethargy of my mind, and therefore due to periodical physical health or debility. For the same MSS., unaltered in any way, which would be declined by countless publishers during an unfortunate period, would be accepted in a period when similar kinds of efforts were equally successful.

I found this periodical set of conditions worked too regularly and too continuously to be, in my opinion, mere coincidence. And then I was led to a further conclusion. I found that by a certain method I could sometimes ascertain the kind of conditions which would act upon me at any given future period. It became a matter largely of mathematical calculation. There were, and are, as I should expect, entire failures and miscalculations. But the more I examined this phenomenon the more I found that in almost every case I could obtain a rough accurate forecast.

Sometimes the results were startlingly accurate. When I went out to France in 1915 I was able to calculate the exact day on which I should return : the forecast was made in May, 1915, and fulfilled, to the day, in November, 1915, and there are two

or three witnesses alive who can testify to the truth of this statement. I could multiply these examples and describe the experiments in detail. But I must leave that to a time when I shall have analysed the method more fully. For, in this context, I do not pretend that the evidence can be convincing to anyone except myself.

I can only say that I am personally convinced that there is a system of law which determines to some extent the conditions which affect my life and, indeed, the lives of others. It does not, I find, involve me in the theory of fatalism, for it leaves a very large field to free will. It merely shows the set of conditions which will operate, and not the way in which an individual will make use of those conditions. The degree of accuracy to which these conditions can be foretold is uncertain, and the concrete form which they can assume, lies, so far as I am concerned, beyond any possibility of calculation. The principle is far too involved and shadowy, so far as my own experiments at present go, to make it likely that the whole truth about the matter can be quickly discovered, any more than one expects to map out a complete psychological law in a generation. It must necessarily be a slow and gradual process, with many failures and miscalculations—even if it can be shown to be a science at all.

But I mention this experiment, because I am now convinced that there is a general law which governs these conditions. And in a personal account of one's belief it is relevant to the argu-

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ment. For what, if accepted as I accept it, does it show? It shows, I think, that personal fortunes, even those fortunes which concern our relations with other people, are due not simply to the free will of those other people. If this were the only cause it would be impossible to foretell how their will would operate. If the continual rejection of my MSS. were due to the good sense, or the impatience, of the publishers, I could not calculate how they would act six months ahead. If my own mental or physical health were the sole cause of my persuasiveness in offering my MSS.—as a matter of fact, an agent does this work for me—I could not very well ascertain six months ahead what temperature my physical and mental energies would register. It means that some force, some system of law, is at work which acts upon my will and their will, that behind the immediate causes of physical and mental (natural) causes, there is some more subtle influence.

I do not think I can do otherwise than describe this influence as super-physical. For the law clearly does not come from human agency—if my theory is true at all—it governs human agency. I am led, therefore, to conclude the existence of certain realities which have no physical form, but are just as certain as the actions which are expressed in physical form. They are intelligent, or intelligible, for they are regular in design. And, so far as they have no physical form, I submit that they are super-physical or “spiritual.” In other words, I am led to believe that there is

evidence of a world of spiritual realities behind this world of physical form and action.

IV

Materialist Arguments against Spiritual Reality are unconvincing

The claim of all religion rests virtually on the existence of a super-physical, spiritual world. And those who altogether refuse to accept the religious claim, do so primarily on the principle that the existence of this invisible world is unproven.

It is clear that science is entirely justified in ignoring probabilities, for its business is to deal with certainties. It cannot afford to accept any claim on the ground that there is merely a likelihood of its truth. The issue, therefore, between science and religion is primarily whether there is positive evidence for the existence of a spiritual world.

The argument that physical injury affects the mental power does not of itself prove that the mind cannot be independent of matter. If I am imprisoned in a room I can only look out on the garden through a window : and if the window is blackened over I shall not be able to see the garden at all. But that is not enough to prove that I have no power to see the landscape except

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by the window : for if I ever escape from the room I shall need no window.

If it is justifiable for the scientific man to hold that the theory of a spiritual world is untenable, it is equally justifiable for those of us who believe we have experience which proves the existence of that world, to believe that the materialist conception is vitiated by its limitation of outlook. For, in our belief, the two worlds interplay so much upon one another, that the nature of the visible world cannot be appreciated if divorced from its relationship with the world of mind and spirit.

And, once more, I do not think that there is a case for criticism because even the alleged evidence of the spiritual world is of so uncertain and vague a nature. I fully admit the incomplete nature of the present evidence. But is this surprising ? Suppose that the ant thinks and reasons : even so, is it probable that it possesses sufficient data to reveal the existence of human life ? And the gulf between incarnate and discarnate human life may well be as great.

The non-materialist or religious claim seems to me infinitely more in accord with such evidence as we possess than the materialist denial. For consider the case of a man who has died a moment ago. His body remains intact—no corruption having yet set in. Materially, he is exactly the same as before, except that he has ceased to breathe. And yet an immense transformation has taken place. He can no longer communicate

with me, the whole of that vital part of him which was his personality has vanished. What is to account for that tremendous change—the change from a man to a corpse? Is it really to be accounted for merely by his ceasing to breathe? For that is inevitably the materialist explanation. His intelligence, his emotions, his consciousness, his power to use his body have utterly disappeared—merely because his heart has ceased to function. Such a theory demands a degree of credulity to which I cannot subscribe.

No, it seems to me much more probable that his intelligence—his individuality or his soul—has also been withdrawn. And if it has been withdrawn, it is more probable that it continues to exist, than that it is instantly annihilated or dissolved. Secondly, the religious claim seems to me to be tenable, because the infinite variety of the universe implies that reality is not limited to the worlds which are visible to our senses. Thirdly, I believe that the data we possess show that the consciousness of will is a cause rather than a result of chemical brain activity. Fourthly, telepathy suggests that thought is not wholly material in nature. And lastly, there is sufficient evidence—so far as I am concerned—to demonstrate the probability of the existence of ordered and intelligent control and design over the affairs of human creatures, which is super-material in nature.

But, in addition to this, there is the subjective value of spiritual intuitive experience. This cannot be cited as evidence, for it is essentially

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subjective, and it is also difficult to prove that it is distinct from self-created imagination. Religious experience lies within the jurisdiction of faith rather than knowledge, but, as I have already pointed out, this experience must establish its validity on a foundation of fact, and in regard to this foundation, criticism and inquiry can usefully operate.

v

God—and the Human Interpretation of God.

This personal affirmation can only be indirectly an argument. So I must pass on to the evidence of an intuitional conviction which I believe is common to many, if not to most men—namely, that when we think or do what we describe as “good,” when our energies are constructive rather than destructive in their direction—we are acting in tune with the general tendency of the universe.

It is difficult to express this in exact terms. But perhaps it is sufficiently mutual to be readily appreciated by most readers. When we act destructively, and think or do what we describe as “evil,” we become aware that our faces are turned against the stream of influences which surround us, and we violate the underlying laws of the cosmos.

When I place this realization alongside my experience that the spiritual world is a world of

mind and intelligence, and not of blind forces which are without scheme or purpose, I am led to assume an Ultimate Force which is the source of all I know to be intelligent and good. And I therefore believe in God.

I do not find myself perturbed by the strange bogeys which haunt the imagination of my friends when they are out on a skirmishing expedition against God. I do not feel the difficulty of distinguishing between God and human conceptions of God. It seems to me perfectly natural that the Jews should have portrayed Him as the stern militarist, nationalist Jehovah, or that to the Victorians He should have appeared as a respectable, elderly English gentleman. But because human conceptions are imperfect it does not follow that there is no reality behind these conceptions. A dozen artists may paint the same sunset : the results will be entirely different, and where the painter is crude in his craft, the result will be a crude picture which reflects many marks of his own limitations. But the sunset is not his creation, nor is the crudity of the painting a sign of the crudity of the reality.

I know that my personal conception of God is inadequate. All conceptions and definitions of an infinite truth must be inadequate, but conceptions and definitions are inevitable and necessary for human purposes. It is quite true that the artist might say, "This sunset is too immense for me to paint : I haven't the skill to reproduce it." But, if he is an artist, he will probably be

inspired to make the attempt. I make no apology, therefore, either for my own conception of God, or for anyone else's conception. An apology is only necessary where these conceptions and definitions *per se* claim to be irrefutable dogmas, over which controversy is stirred up between various religions. Not a few of the apparent differences of religions are due to differences of definition.

If there is a God, a heaven, a hell, a scheme of continuous life, or an explanation of the order in which we find ourselves, I am sure that the truth about them extends far beyond the margin of our narrow imagination. Problems about a Personal God, or the controversy between heaven and nirvana, do not, I confess, greatly interest me, because their full reality cannot be contained in human perception or finite language. The only relevant issue is whether the idea behind them, when distinguished absolutely from the human definition of the idea, is real in essence.

It is necessary for artists to paint, and it is necessary for some artists to paint sunsets. Equally it is necessary for theologians to define infinite perceptions so as to convey some sort of meaning. The fact that we know our definition is a mere fragmentary impression need not deter us from using such definitions. When I speak, for example, of a Personal God, I am aware that I am immediately creating a picture of God which is false so far as it limits Him to the compass of my conception of a "person." But it is a term which I adopt deliberately and, I think, consistently, in

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order to convey the idea of an Infinite Mind and Infinite Goodness rather than a pantheistic abstraction, or a totality which is sub-human, rather than super-human, so far as intelligence is concerned.

CHAPTER SIX

THE JUSTIFICATION FOR CHRISTIAN BELIEF

I

My Reasons for Belief in Miracles

WHEN we begin to refer to the intellectual difficulties of the modern man so as to build up a constructive statement of belief, we find that the most fundamental difficulty in regard to miracles centres round the doctrine of the Incarnation.

The modern man cannot bring himself to believe that, even if there were an intelligent God, He would have manifested Himself in a single historical figure. He is prepared, as we have seen, to acknowledge in Jesus of Nazareth an ideal human example, and perhaps the most perfect example which the human record has presented. But he cannot believe that this character was the Second Person of an Infinite Trinity. And he is therefore barred out, at the very beginning of his inquiries, from allegiance to the Christian Religion.

I am impressed by the fact that the tendency of orthodoxy in the past has been to meet such difficulties by increasing the difficulty. All

modernist attempts to bridge this gulf by suggesting the comparative divinity of man are countered from the orthodox side with an insistence upon the unique character of the Incarnation. So far as the modernist tendency is to compromise the truth in order to bridge the gulf, there is every justification for resisting such a policy. But equally false is the process of defining truth for the purpose merely of widening the gulf between orthodoxy and modern thought. The truth is what matters, and, only when that is established, does it become desirable to see whether any bridge can be constructed.

There are two considerations which I offer in this connection.

The first is that to isolate the personality of Jesus Christ from human characteristics is, on the most orthodox count, a gross heresy. Not only is it true that He was man, but it is false from all orthodox standards to say that man bears no trace of divine incarnation. The Christian Religion declares, on the contrary, that man is a spirit and an immortal soul, that the Holy Spirit is bestowed on him by Baptism and Confirmation, that Christ dwells in him by the act of Communion, and that his physical body is a temple of the Holy Ghost. What is this but a declaration that in man there is a fragment at least of a divine incarnation, that not only is he made in the image of God, but that the more he fulfils the mission of the divine intention, he becomes, as we say, more "Christ-like"? The uniqueness of Christ is

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that in Christ there was a complete indwelling of the Deity, that His humanity was sinless, that He was an absolute manifestation of God. But to deny that there is any similarity—any comparative degree of similarity—between the fragmentary reflection of God in ordinary man and this complete manifestation, seems to me a contradiction in terms, false in principle and evil in its practical results.

I suggest that there is an avenue of approach here between orthodox Christianity and modern thought which must be explored, quite apart from any propagandist motives. When the modern man speaks of Christ as being the most perfect man he is crudely right and not fundamentally wrong. To deny this is to deny that Christianity teaches that in every man there is a spark of the divine nature, a spirit as well as an animal instinct. And what is this but a faint reflection of a complete Incarnation, that divine reflection which was so absolute that the God of Heaven and Earth manifested Himself fully in the Son of Man?

The second consideration is one which applies not only to the Incarnation but to all the miraculous elements in the Christian claim.

Let us apply it first, however, to the Incarnation. I approach the Incarnation as the result of my belief that behind this visible world is a spiritual world, and that the latter plays upon and directs the former. Consider a single example from the mental world, which is also, I submit, super-physical in nature. A composer is inspired by a

musical theme. The genesis of this theme I should deny altogether to be that of physical activity within his brain. The inspiration is objective and is "breathed into" his mind. It is more real, and not less real, than the physical expression of it : for when he writes it down, and the manuscript is destroyed by a fire, or by an interfering housemaid, he can rewrite it from the mental conception which still remains. The physical composition is therefore the result of the inspiration and the mental conception. All action and physical expression are due to thought.

Further than this, we may say that, if the mind of the composer becomes possessed of a sufficiently strong inspiration, it is almost inevitable that he should produce the composition. The incentive would be too powerful for him to resist. If this principle is accepted, there follows an extremely important conclusion. The probability, or reality, of a physical incident can most accurately be tested by asking whether there is a mental or spiritual reality behind it. The physical incident, in other words, is the result of the super-physical influence, and it is to that super-physical realm, rather than to the historical incident, that we should look if we want to discover the truth. If we want to find out if A murdered B, we must discover A's mental attitude to B. If A is caught red-handed we have, of course, the most direct evidence. But, even so, we have to examine A's motive, if we are to decide whether his action was

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one of self-defence, or manslaughter, or murder. The historical or physical realm is less important than the invisible reality behind it.

I believe in the Incarnation chiefly because I see that the spiritual world is not isolated from the physical world, but, at every turn, appears to permeate it. In my conception God reveals Himself partly in man. And since there seems to be everywhere a system of gradation—that is, of comparative degrees, it is precisely because of the lesser manifestation of God in man that I should believe a complete and perfect manifestation is likely either to have happened, or at least, to be likely to happen in the future.

But the tendency of orthodox theologians has been to adopt the opposite process and to lay emphasis on the historical rather than on the spiritual reality. Accordingly the proof for the Incarnation has lain on the scriptural record, for the Resurrection on the Empty Tomb, for the miracles on the witness of those who saw them. Catholic orthodoxy has taken its stand laid upon the physical reality, for example, of the Virgin Birth, and any attempt to express faith rather in its spiritual significance—if this has seemed to imply a weakening of faith in the historical event—has been denounced as the worst of heresies.

This tendency is curiously akin to materialism. For the suspicion of any attempt to find a spiritual meaning is due to a belief that spiritual meanings are less real than physical events. This is very

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natural, but it is quite unsound. It is quite unsound to believe that the written musical composition is real, while the idea in the composer's mind is shadowy and less actual. The very word "ethereal" conveys this popular meaning of fairy-like unreality. It will take a long time for the infant science of psychology to teach us that the world of mind is as real, if not more vital, than the world of chemical matter.

"But," it may be said, "surely you are guilty here of a contradiction. You started off by pointing out that the modern man demands proof by demonstration, *i.e.*, by physical demonstration, and you agreed with the value of such evidence. Now you are suggesting that the physical realm is of little consequence. Is not that a direct contradiction?"

It will seem a contradiction unless we are careful to avoid confusion. It must be in the physical order that absolute proof can be found, for we agree that our physical senses are less likely to lead us astray than our reasoning faculties, and it is only the physical realm which is discernible to our senses. But, while this is the realm where direct proof is to be looked for, the importance, the motive, the value, lies in the spiritual activities which cause the physical action.

The Empty Tomb was of immense importance to contemporaries as proof of the Resurrection. But it is altogether a different matter in this age to insist on its value for the purposes of historical evidence. So far as my own personal belief is

concerned—apart, that is, from any question of authority or tradition—the Empty Tomb is credible because of the probability that a perfect spiritual Life would visualize and transform a physical body—because, indeed, I can conceive of no ultimate gulf dividing spirit and matter. The Empty Tomb is, for me, a consistent effect of that principle rather than a vital historical proof—at this length of time—on which, as for early Christians, the truth of the Resurrection stands or falls. Similarly, the Incarnation becomes the expression of the spiritual reality—as I conceive it—that God, if He is manifest at all in humanity, would be perfectly and completely manifested in one human individual.

I apply this principle to all the miracles. It is not the historical event which is vital to their reality, but the spiritual reality which renders a historical expression credible. If Christ was the Son of God, then contact with humanity must have introduced supernatural power into the natural order ; just as man disturbs what would appear to the plant, if the plant possessed intelligence, to be the laws of nature. A plant cannot move from one place to another, yet man can uproot it, and deposit it far away in some other soil without the least difficulty. His contact with the plant introduces into the experience of the plant what is a sheer miraculous intervention.

The usual method of approach to the miracles seems to me, therefore, to be at fault. The reality

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of a "miracle" is the spiritual law or force behind it. The form in which that law is expressed in historical incident is by comparison entirely secondary. The emphasis has been laid in the wrong order. And that is responsible for some of the intellectual difficulty which estranges the modern man, in this respect, from orthodoxy.

Those who explain Christianity as a myth seem to me to be guilty of exactly the opposite extreme. They reject the claim that these miracles occurred as historical incidents because they realize only their spiritual significance. In my conception a spiritual principle is certain to express itself in the world of physical, historical action, just as an idea tends to become a material result. Because a mother loves her child she will embrace her child. But it is the belief in her love, rather than in the form in which her love is expressed, which matters.

II

The Difficulty of Prayer

We return now to the problem of prayer.

I confess that the modern difficulty, outlined in chapter four, seems in the main to be reasonable. A good deal of the popular application of prayer does involve a magical theory of the scheme of life, though it is very natural and human that this application should occur.

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Prayer, as I conceive it, is essentially an attitude of mind. Ideally it is summed up in the phrase, "Thy will be done." It is the act of placing oneself in harmony with God's purpose, or in tune with the universe—however you may choose to describe it. It is the recognition that there is an Intelligence, which controls the world, rather than blind forces to which no address is possible.

Moreover, the act of prayer calls into play the power of thought, and I should not care to draw a limit to that power in all kinds of unseen directions. If prayer is strong enough it must be a mental force, and I conceive that this force may work through many unknown mediums and vitalize all sorts of influences. Even on the purely natural hypothesis of telepathy, the prayer of a mother for her son must surround him with mental influences which will affect his physical environment.

And still further I believe in prayer because I believe that the Incarnation of God in man has shown that there is no isolation or barrier between this Perfect Intelligence and humanity. Christ has rendered conceivable, however imperfect my conception, the Brotherhood of Himself and the Fatherhood of the Father. I am praying not to an incomprehensible Universe. I am praying to an Intelligence Who is so near to man that He has become man.

It is this conception on which Christ laid such emphasis when He taught His disciples how to

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pray. They were to address God as ‘Our Father,’ and, even though this personal approach will involve, so far as the majority of human petitioners is concerned, a personal request for personal benefits, and the suggestion that God alters the course of events because of such requests, it is better that this should be so than that men should not pray. Actually, however, Christ’s doctrine of prayer insists on prayer as the true attitude of mind. We are to pray in order that we may place ourselves in harmony and true relationship with God, not in order that we may alter His purpose. ‘Thy will be done’ is the vital expression. ‘Let this cup pass from me—nevertheless Thy will, not mine, be done.’

Prayer in the aspect of worship, of adoration or of thanksgiving, seems to me to be explicable and natural even to those whose sense of God is quite different from my own. In this aspect it is as inevitable as the sense of worship which is aroused by the panorama of sunrise on the Alps, or by a magnificent artistic masterpiece. Even if we go no further in our vision of God than the realization of the physical universe, there are moments in all our lives when we are awed by the splendour and the immensity of the natural order. And these moments are occasional only because of our limitations. The universe is majestic not only when viewed from the summit of the Alps. It is the same universe seen from the Potteries or the flat suburbs of Middlesex.

Prayer is an act of Communion with the

Supreme God. A man who makes no such act of unity, or is conscious of no unity with God, is not completely alive. That, I believe, is a main test—to discover how far we are shut in to ourselves so as to think of ourselves only as isolated units to whom the whole universe, and everyone in the universe, is foreign and separate. As creatures develop from their primitive knowledge they develop their individual sense and become no longer the fragment of a species, or group, or tribe. But there is a further development of knowledge. And that, without losing the individual sense, is to realize our complete inter-relation with the whole, with mankind, with creation, and with the God in Whom all creation moves and has its being.

III

The Need for Different Methods of Worship

There seems to be a continual mental effort required of most of us, if we are properly to appreciate the extent of human variety. Very soon we drift, if we do not take care, into the assumption that the only reason why people do not come to the same conclusions which we have reached, is that they are stupid or prejudiced : or, if we happen to have an inferiority complex, we say, rather bitterly, that they reject our conclusions because they are too clever.

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Especially is this tendency apparent in the religious world. It is peculiarly difficult to appreciate that other people may reject our deepest religious convictions, not on account of stupidity, or prejudice, or cleverness, but simply because their minds are so constituted that they view these conditions from an entirely different angle.

If again we think of a number of artists painting the same sunset, we appreciate the fact that each of the pictures would vary considerably, not only on account of the difference of skill in technique, but because each artist would interpret the scene according to his own mentality. Far greater is the variety of interpretation in so profound a subject as that of religion. When we remember not only the distinctions between the individuals immediately surrounding us, but of other races of men, the differences between Celt and Teuton, the mysticism of the Slav, and the remoteness from our standpoint of the Indian and Chinese personalities, our imagination must gauge, at least to some extent, the difficulty of obtaining from this infinite variety of type anything approaching a common subscription to an entirely uniform religious system.

This variety includes a difference of temperament and a difference of mentality. Let us first consider the difference of temperament, since this probably presents fewer difficulties.

Most people are prepared to allow that there is such a phenomenon as variety of temperament.

Much as they may resent the presence of those temperamental characteristics which are most antagonistic to their own, they have to admit their existence. There are artistic people, and business-like people, and athletic people, domesticated people, and a thousand other types whose sympathies and sentiments respond chiefly to some influence which may be quite foreign to our own individuality. Temperament in religion concerns chiefly the form of worship which the religion offers. One form will appeal to some temperaments, but it will arouse hostility or indifference in others. A music-lover will be inspired by the musical accessories of Catholic worship, but another man will be wearied and irritated. One man will feel himself at one with the simple dignity of Mattins in an Anglican cathedral, another will feel that it is unimpressive and that it kills all devotional sense within him.

To some degree each separate religion recognizes and caters for that difference of temperament. But religions do not recognize the difference fully enough. A Catholic, for example, often declares that the people who dislike the music and ornate ceremonial of High Mass can go to Low Mass. He forgets that even the simplicity of Low Mass would antagonize thousands of men and women. You might allow Mass to be offered as the Evangelical celebrates the Lord's Supper. But even that degree of variety would leave untouched a wide area of temperament to which no set form

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of worship, however unceremonial, naturally appeals.

It is a mistake to suppose that these temperamental antagonisms consist exclusively of conservative prejudices which can be broken down in time. They can be broken down where they are merely due to conservative influences, as, indeed, frequently they are. Thus, a Protestant convert to Catholicism learns in time to overcome his repugnance for sacramental worship. We are all of us inclined to dislike and suspect what is strange to us, and to hold dear whatever is wrapt up with a long series of happy and traditional associations. But the dislike of change only accounts for a certain proportion of temperamental differences. There are deeper psychological causes at work than hereditary tradition. And these will not be affected merely by becoming familiar with the new order. For every Protestant who in time comes to "feel at home" in a Catholic service, there are hundreds of others in whom Catholic worship, however familiar it may be, awakens no response.

But there is another argument which may be advanced at this point. You may very reasonably point out that the question for a man to decide is not which form of worship most appeals to him, but which form of worship is most pleasing to God. And, if you are Catholic or Protestant, you will point out, further, that the Catholic or the Protestant form of worship, respectively, is that which God has clearly ordained for His service. Yet

even this argument does not meet the whole of the difficulty. For, if there is substantially such a phenomenon as variety of temperament, it seems incredible to suppose that God expects men to worship Him in a way which conflicts with the particular individual temperaments which He has created. A man cannot approach God by a road which is foreign to his whole nature. You could not reasonably demand that a poet should describe the sunset, not in verse which he can write, but in music, which he cannot compose. If temperamental variety is a fundamental characteristic of human personality, there will be forms of language which are barbarous tongues to many human beings. You cannot drill the temperament into any kind of devotional expression, unless the temperamental nature is made up only of superficial prejudices.

This is not really a fundamental difficulty, for a religion could enormously extend the variety of its forms of worship without compromising its claims. The Catholic Church could, without much effort, tolerate and include the Protestant type of service. The Mass itself is capable of many forms. It is only necessary to remember that no one religious system at present presents this variety, though the Church of England in this respect covers a wider field than probably any other institution. And, even so, there remain the vast number of people whom no form of corporate worship attracts, however much we may happen to regret the fact.

The Need for Variety in the Interpretation of Truth

But we enter a more delicate field of controversy when we consider the existence of variety of mental outlook.

In practice religious people also recognize this variety. The most confirmed Catholic, or Evangelical, or Christian Scientist, or any other religionist, sees that there are thousands of his fellow-men who reject his intellectual standpoint, and who, however mistaken they may be, appear to find their own position satisfactory. In fact, however much we may be convinced that ours is the one divinely appointed revelation of truth, we are forced to admit that, at present at least, the divine scheme tolerates not one but many roads : and that men live and die in good faith as agnostics, or Protestants, or Roman Catholics, or Buddhists, as convinced as we are that they are right, and that it is we, not they, who persist in error.

But, however much in practice we may admit that there are these infinite number of religious beliefs, and that men live and die without an apparent vocation to follow ours, in theory our position is very different. Most of my religious friends would view with horror any suggestion that no one religious creed, as at present constructed, is sufficient for the whole human

race. To admit that there may be other religions, partially true, or as true as, or more true than their own, implies disloyalty to their faith. What, for want of a better name, we have described as the sectarian outlook, is really the claim that other religions are substantially unnecessary. Each of the existing denominations, in effect, declares that it is sufficient, and believes that ultimately all men will be converted to its standpoint.

I confess that, personally, I do not feel this difficulty. I happen to be an Anglo-Catholic, and I should not accept that label, or follow my particular religion, if I did not believe in it. But I do not find myself unable to realize that there is a subjective side to my convictions, that, in fact, my belief takes the form it does, partly as a result of my own peculiar type of mind.

The phrase, "different aspects of truth," as we have already remarked, irritates many orthodox people, and there is some justification for their irritation. For it is a phrase which is very loosely used by apologists who are too mentally lethargic to differentiate aspects of truth and sheer contradictions. It is impossible, for instance, that both Roman Catholics and Anglicans should be equally right in their verdict as to Anglican Orders, or that both Christians and atheists should be correct in their conclusions as to the existence of God. But I am forced to realize how often apparent contradictions are affirmations of the same truth from different angles. And, so far as I can claim to have any knowledge of comparative religion, I am

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much more impressed by the underlying unity of the various creeds, than of their opposition.

It is easy enough to drift into platitudes when expressing one's general standpoint. But, when I see the variety of human mental types, when I realize how quickly one begins to imagine that one's own mental groove is capable of no enlargement, and when I look out on the infinite number of religions and philosophies, I cannot pretend that the interpretation which I adopt and the creed to which I subscribe is likely to be complete. I cannot walk along every road, or examine every religious claim, though I do not thereby ignore the existence or the value of other roads and other claims—except so far as they directly challenge my own.

"But," you may say, "such a theory ultimately denies the conception of a revealed religion. For, if the Christian claim is true at all, must not this revelation be absolute and incapable of any suggestion of a parallel system? Was not the Faith 'once delivered to the Saints,' and does not this rule out any other faith delivered to other saints?"

This is the kind of objection which can be answered in several ways. I will give but one answer, and that answer is the distinction between the revelation of a truth and the interpretation or definition of a truth so revealed.

The definition is on a very different level from the revelation. For definition is a human process, the shaping or interpretation of a truth by human

beings in human language. And the moment an interpretation is attempted, as, indeed, it must be attempted, it limits the truth to the scope of very finite language and phraseology. It is like the picture of the sunset which one of the artists has painted. But there is room for other pictures. They may not be equal in value. But though the sunset is complete, I am unable to agree that any one picture, however inspired a masterpiece it may be, is complete.

I feel that so many of my co-religionists fail to appreciate this distinction between the revealed truth and its interpretation. A doctrine is inevitably an interpretation. The idea may be complete, but the definition is a limitation, and there may even be room for different interpretations of the same definition. The Catholic Church in different ages has certainly varied in her interpretation of cardinal truths. The history of all religions is, indeed, a process of development. A religion which has become so static that it is incapable of assimilating new interpretations, and consequently of making readjustments, has ceased to live. It is no longer led by the Spirit into all truth, for, if it will not move, it cannot be led.

If a corporate or an individual faith is capable of development and change in its interpretation and appreciation, it does not mean that the faith is less sure. For if a faith is true, it possesses both a spirit and an expression, and the spirit is not confined to one crystallized expression.

There should be no serious difficulty in appreciating the distinction between the spirit or essence of the Catholic Faith, and the interpretations and definitions by which that Faith has been humanly expressed. It is the distinction between the sunset and the picture of the sunset. Nor is it difficult to distinguish the values of these two elements. The spirit of Catholic Truth is a pure revelation, a "Faith once delivered to the Saints." But inevitably the revelation becomes limited and incomplete as men attempt to give it expression. The human realization of the Faith must always be in process of evolution, and liable to change, as it develops.

Can this development involve a contradiction or denial of previous interpretations? If we keep strictly before our minds the difference between the truth and the human application or definition of the truth, there should be no confusion in our minds regarding our answer to that question. A new interpretation which contradicted not only a previous doctrinal interpretation, but the truth which that previous interpretation embodied, would obviously deny the very principles of revelation. But there seems to be no justification for assuming that the doctrinal form in which a truth is expressed is necessarily inevitable.

It is in that sense that the Catholic Faith is capable of development. Christians have not as yet learned the full implication of Christianity, and there are many quarters from which their education may be derived. They may learn from

other religions and from sceptical criticism. It must also be remembered that other religions and sceptical criticism have much to learn from orthodox Christianity.

The activity of Christian missionary propaganda frequently excites a peculiar animosity in the mind of the modern man and woman. There would be some justification for this mistrust if missions were to be regarded only as agencies for suppressing rival religious beliefs in the interests of a particular Christian definition of the truth. But, if we realize that missionary organization should be designed, not only to supply what is lacking in the non-Christian outlook, but to assimilate and absorb all that is true in the religions with which it is brought into contact, there is little justification for hostility. It is the interplay of the varieties of human thought which alone produces a due sense of proportion, and it is where a religion has become isolated that it has suffered most severely. Who will deny the influence of Greek philosophy upon early Christianity? Even if this interplay and contact take the form of controversy and competition, the results are more satisfactory than isolation. Indeed, most Catholic doctrines have been defined as a result of the Church being stung into action by the attacks of heresy.

And if anyone should doubt whether non-Christianity stands in vital need of Christian education, he should be invited to examine the record of other religious influences. We may choose to discount some of Miss Mayo's indict-

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ment of Hinduism and Mohammedanism in *Mother India*, but, in the main, her facts are indisputable. The results of Hinduism—of Mohammedanism, not only in India, but in Turkey and other parts of the world—and of Buddhist passivism, are so glaring that no sane man will deny that there is need of drastic reform. The proposition can be taken further without fear of any rational disagreement. The record of Christian influence, with all its faults and failures, is immeasurably higher than that of any other religious influence which exists or ever has existed. There are certain cardinal Christian truths of which the lack in other religions, if only from a pragmatic standpoint, is disastrous. I doubt if this assertion can be challenged even by the most uncompromising agnostic. The religion which is most true is the religion which is capable of absorbing all that is truest in other religious conceptions, and primarily by that test I profess my allegiance to the Catholic Faith. For, personally, I believe the Catholic Religion does indeed contain the sum of all religions more fully than any other religious system. It is because I conceive of the Catholic Church as something which is greater than any vision of mine has contemplated, that I ask to dwell within her gates.

If Christianity were nothing more than the Christianity which Christians offer to the world, then indeed I should despair of the future. Our hope lies in the belief that religion is mightier than any human religious perception.

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For if a faith could not grow, and change in its growth, and pass through reformations and reactions, without being false to itself, it would mean that the faith was no more than the dogmatic form in which it was expressed. Religion would be a form without a spirit. The Church would be an institution without life. If we believe that there is any inspiration in our faith then we shall not confuse the body with the divine flame which burns within it, we shall not worship the institution or fall down in adoration before the words in which the truth has been defined. For we shall know that these things are but the framework which enshrines an eternal fire, and that this fire shall not grow dim through all the generations of men, even though its form may change and grow, as our realization of its meaning becomes more sure and more complete.

v

The Fallibility of Churchmen

The whole of the remainder of the destructive criticism—the doubt which was thrown on the reliability of the Church as a teaching guide, in view of her past mistakes—the indictment of the Church's personnel—the alleged imperfections of her moral record, and her present moral standard—can be considered under one head. For

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they raise one radical issue—the question whether the Church is inspired and infallible, or whether she is as fallible as any other human organization—like, for example, the Conservative or Labour parties.

If the Church is no more than that, all these failures—supposing them to be true—are perfectly explicable. For human organizations are constantly making mistakes and are unquestionably drifting into errors and abuses. Modern criticism only becomes relevant when it is claimed that the Church is to a full or partial degree infallible or divinely inspired. The moment that we make such a claim it is relevant to ask why the Church should have opposed scientific truth, why she should attract to her ministry and her ranks, as a whole, men of a second-rate intellectual standard, and why she should have been guilty of hideous abuses in the past.

We may, of course, deny that there is justification for any of these criticisms. But, if we convince ourselves that they are totally unfounded we are not likely to convince anyone who turns the pages of history. A fair-minded man will agree that institutional Christianity has brought immense blessings to humanity : but he will also admit that it has been guilty of gross faults. And it becomes necessary, not merely to apologize, but to account for these faults in the light of the claim that the Church is a divinely-guided medium, leading mankind through the wilderness to the eventual haven of revealed truth.

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As this is a personal statement, I need not concern myself here with the position of those who do not approach the question from my standpoint. But I am very vitally concerned. For though I may believe that there are exaggerations in the destructive criticism which I have represented as coming from the modern mind, I cannot and do not question a great deal of its accuracy. And I am forced to ask whether the Church is more than a human organization, with as little supernatural inspiration within her as animates any other human organization.

The Church is quite obviously a human organization, as the most orthodox Roman Catholic will agree. Her composition is human. Her machinery is human. She is officered and manned by those who, in the main, have been as fallible and as imperfect as the men who form any other group or institution. And all her imperfections, past or present, are, as all of us will also agree, attributable to that cause.

But does this admission rule out the claim that she is divinely inspired? To me the fact of her inspiration is as evident as that of her human machinery. To deny her inspiration would be to maintain that her Creed, her Sacraments, her message to mankind, were merely human inventions, and, in view of her claim, an entire fraud. Such a conclusion is contrary, I should submit, to the witness of history, and certainly to my own experience. Nor do I believe that any intelligent man of to-day, however much estranged he may be

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from institutional Christianity, would deny that the Christian Faith manifests the genuine marks of spiritual inspiration and revelation. To deny that there is inspiration, and therefore truth, behind the beauty of Catholic worship, behind the gospel and the Sacraments which have brought consolation and refreshment into millions of lives, to regard as false the message which has inspired some of the greatest artists, and before which the mightiest warriors have bowed the knee, seems to me to be a mere philistine inability to read the lessons of history. It is a failure to appreciate the capacity of mankind to be conscious of a purity of faith which is so pure that it cannot be a self-created delusion.

The difference between the modern man outside the Church and the Churchman is simply the degree to which they would respectively maintain that the divine truth is hidden behind the human framework. The modern man would say that much of what the Churchman claims to be infallible truth is human handiwork ; and the Churchman would say that much of this alleged human handiwork is the voice of the Holy Spirit.

It is the degree to which these two contrary influences extend which is the issue. There is little difference in the principle involved.

And that is precisely where the confusion lies. For so completely do the human machinery and the divine inspiration interplay, one upon the other, that it is difficult to draw a line between

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them, and to distinguish the one from the other.

The mistake which many orthodox apologists make is that they have attempted, indeed, to draw an arbitrary line between the two influences. For that line does not correspond to reality. You may assume to be final and absolute any declaration the Church has made in her official capacity, such as when she has spoken through the Pope *ex cathedra*, or through general councils, or through the text of the scriptures. Nevertheless the divine and the human elements are not separable into water-tight compartments. There has never been an occasion in the history of the Church when her human machinery was silenced and the divine voice spoke without such a medium. Any declaration of truth must necessarily be framed in human language. The text of the Bible did not drop like manna from the heavens, nor have popes or bishops been hypnotized so that they became mere automata repeating the words of an oracle. The significance of the pentecostal dispensation is that God has spoken through the voice of man, and that though the voice and the mind of man have been inspired and purified by the divine message, the divine message has correspondingly been tinged with the imperfections of the human mind. Revelation is, in fact, a painful evolution much more than an automatic process.

And if this to the non-Catholic seems to be a pious fantasy, we have only to turn to the sacramental nature of other sources of inspiration.

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A composer has his theme; it is his composition, the sequence of the chords, the placing of the melody, the cadence, the time, the harmony with which he surrounds it, so as to bring it down to earth. There is certainly a divine inspiration, so that his work, and even he himself may be affected by the breath of the inspiration. But the composer can spoil it by his imperfect construction. I cannot say where the responsibility of his mind has ceased and the divine elements of the inspiration remain in their naked purity. I only know that the inspiration is there. For all the composer's clumsiness the spirit is there, in the whole structure, but I cannot locate it specifically in any fragment of the whole, any more than I can locate the unity of the human soul in any fragment of the physical organism. The relation of spiritual upon physical, of mind upon matter, or of divine inspiration upon human interpretation is so subtle, so delicate an interplay, that any attempt to name the exact boundary between them is almost certain to be inaccurate.

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The Power of the Church to Change

We may differentiate in degree what is called religious inspiration from artistic or intellectual inspiration, but we cannot do so in kind. For inspiration is always a divine breath which becomes

incarnate in a human mind and body. It kindles and purifies the mind, and the emotions and physical senses of that human being, but it becomes definitely qualified and coloured by his thoughts and actions. It becomes part of himself.

The tendency of all institutionalism, as we have seen, is to over-estimate the value of the institution. The Holy Spirit is incarnate in the Catholic Church, manifesting Himself both in the intellectual or doctrinal developments of the Church, and in the sacramental life. But the Church is also the human framework, and the truth she enshrines has been coloured by her mentality, in each age, defined in her contemporary language, limited to her imagination, tarnished by her emotions, and shamed by her actions. I find no difficulty in accounting for her imperfections either in the past or present, any more than I find difficulty in accounting for the disagreeable qualities of the Chosen People, or the moral failures of a poet or scientist.

I cannot deny the inspiration because the institution has sometimes failed. Nor can I fall down in idolatrous worship before the institution.

Now these general sentiments have, I find, a very practical bearing on my own position. Though I believe that truth is incapable of decay or change, I see no such indestructibility in the human interpretation which is the form of the doctrine.

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Still more is this true of obligations and rules and forms of worship. For these forms are of relative value. They may be of immense relative value. To me the Catholic system of obligation to attend Mass on certain days, auricular confession, the invitation to meditation and worship, is so valuable an influence in my life that I regard it as something more than a merely human device. But I am not prepared for a moment to maintain that these rules are in themselves eternal, that they may not require modification and correction —and even perhaps abandonment. I should not regard any such abandonment as defeat, but rather as the persistent triumph of spirit over form, and as proof that the divine inspiration is not limited to any one kind of human expression.

There are many of my co-religionists who will resent these implications. A large, but probably decreasing, body of people demand a species of certainty and stability, which really means unchangeableness. "How can we be sure," they ask, "if to-morrow there is to be a restatement?" "How can we follow a rule and bind ourselves to an obligation which is liable to correction? What is the use of a Church which speaks with so uncertain voice that one day she says one thing and on another appears to contradict herself?" I agree that such questions echo a human requirement which cannot be ignored, and that probably it is better for such people to make to themselves idols and assume that the pronouncements framed in human language are the utterances of a delphic

oracle. But it is nevertheless a fallacy to argue that, because you need certainty, anything which speaks with certainty must be true.

And, though such people should have the liberty to satisfy their requirements, they become a danger when they seek to predominate over the liberty of others. As I see it, the profound danger of Christian orthodoxy to-day is exactly this conservative crystallized outlook. It has always been so. The medieval Church, which so admirably adapted the philosophy of Aristotle to her contemporary needs, became, as we have seen, a definite obstacle to the scientific inquiries and experiments of Galileo and Descartes. To-day the same tendency is evident. Whenever Churchmen are required to face an immediate problem, such, for example, as birth-control, or divorce, or the admission of women into the ministry, they start with the premiss that, whatever evidence is brought to their notice, the language and the discipline of the Church must remain unchanged. It may be that birth-control, and divorce, and a female priesthood, are devoid of any merit. But they must be judged freely on their merits, and not prejudged because hitherto the Church has set her moral law against them.

If on these, or on any other such issues, the Church were to alter her regulations, she would not necessarily have become false to her witness. We are false to our faith only if we surrender the eternal principles which have justified the law. And, though it is difficult to separate in our

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minds the truth from the form, the principle from the application, we are bound to attempt to distinguish them. For forms and laws and obligations are temporal and have their day. We must never be saddled with their carcasses.

In a former chapter we considered the validity of the argument that religion is primarily concerned both with supernatural virtues and truth, and that, therefore, neither the moral record, nor the test of how far a doctrine appeals to the natural intelligence is relevant. But, as I attempted to show, the supernatural—if, as in my case, we accept it at all—directly influences the natural, so that, if a man possesses the supernatural virtues, his natural moral character must be affected ; and if a claim is true, and thus acceptable to the supernatural gift of faith, it cannot be wholly repellent to natural intelligence.

This is another means of stating the claim that religion has a spiritual reality besides a human expression. I believe the Catholic Religion to be true both in its faith and morals, but I cannot place the same value on the form in which this truth is expressed. Let us apply this principle to the concrete example of divorce. The spiritual truth behind the Catholic doctrine of marriage is, I should claim, the fact that by true consent and love God joins together a man and woman in a way which places the union far beyond any human contract, a bond which is incapable of dissolution by the artificial decree of the High Court. But the truth is capable of many applications. I

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should see no inconsistency in the Church ordaining that the consent of the parties must be a consent of full love and knowledge, and that where this is absent, no ceremony in church could sanctify what had never been in existence. It is, indeed, in the direction of an extension of nullity that I should hope to see some solution of the divorce difficulty.

The principle or spirit behind the moral doctrine of continence seems to me equally distinct from the form which it takes in respect to the birth control controversy. The principle could quite legitimately take a different form from that in which ecclesiastical legislation now defines it. It is the conservative type of mind which can conceive of no change of form without surrender of principle, and it is the tragedy of the Church that she has been fettered so continuously by the conservative outlook of Churchmen. So that, strangely enough, we have the paradox that it is the most enthusiastically orthodox Churchman who has the least belief in the powers and right of the Church to change.

VII

The Necessity of Dogmatic Religion

Modern objection against a dogmatic religion is a complaint which seems to me to be comparatively meaningless.

It is quite reasonable to object to a dogmatic attitude : that is a popular use of the word which merely implies an assertive and dictatorial manner of making statements. But, in its literal sense, I understand dogmatism to mean simply a conclusion which is put into the form of a statement so that it can be communicated to other people. It seems to me to be quite impossible for any body of opinion, religious or secular, to avoid dogma. Even a negative attitude, such as agnosticism, must state its negative conclusions, and the moment these statements are made in communicative form, they are dogmas.

The popular outcry against dogmatic religion appears, therefore, to be a criticism which is glibly framed, but has little substance behind it. The only kind of religious attitude which could claim to be undogmatic would be a religion in which no conclusions were reached, like a theme of music which was never reduced to composition.

I can trace no difference whatever in principle between what is called dogmatic Christianity and the modern attitude. You may disagree, of course, with particular dogmas. You may reject them all as untrue. You may resent the "dogmatic" behaviour of a Church or of a person. But it is quite inconsistent to object to dogmatism, as such, because any form of thought made communicable to other people is dogmatic.

It is sometimes said that dogma is an assertion which is offered on the strength of authority and without proof. But this introduces an altogether

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different set of considerations, and confuses the dogma with the behaviour of the person who preaches the dogma. The manner in which you present a dogma has no bearing on the dogma itself.

The only moral which we need draw from this criticism is that dogmatists of any brand are always in danger of idolatrous behaviour towards the dogmas which they have framed—the same liability of confusion between the human definition of a truth and the truth itself which we have already discussed. In fact, while there can be no legitimate criticism against dogma, there is much to be said against a dogmatic attitude. Dogmas are necessary, but there is no need to insist on them “dogmatically.”

VIII

Is there more than one True Religion ?

We have already observed how deeply the monopoly claim of each religious group is embedded in the minds of those who view religion from the ultra-sectarian standpoint. To suggest that there is anything to be learnt from rival creeds, or that there is any legitimate comparative place for such creeds in the present stage of human development, seems to them to involve disloyalty and a want of conviction in their profession of

faith. Where religious systems are comparatively akin to one another, this monopoly-claim is slightly modified. Probably most orthodox Wesleyans would agree that, in the final re-union of Christendom, Presbyterianism, and perhaps Low Church Anglicanism will be included. Anglo-Catholics would certainly allow that it is the divine intention for a large number of people to be Roman Catholics and Orthodox Easterns. But these are slight extensions of the monopoly theory. Any extension which allows both for the Protestant and the Catholic system, and certainly any recognition of a non-Christian religion, seems to the normal orthodox mind the basest betrayal of allegiance.

This issue is complicated by the loose suggestion which many unorthodox people advance—namely, that all religions are equal. This complicates the issue so far as it justifies the orthodox believer in repudiating such a theory, and in falling back on the opposite extreme, which is, in effect, that one religion alone is right and all the others are wrong.

I have never felt much patience with either of these attitudes. They are too obviously the loose assertions of people who have not given the matter five minutes' thought. Anyone who could seriously maintain that Buddhism is not a better religion, from every point of view, than the fetishism of a South Sea Islander, ought to be quietly removed to a lunatic asylum. And I confess that it does not seem much more rational to ignore the comparative truth or value, which must exist

from any point of view, in rival creeds. One religion may be more complete, or alone complete—that, on any calculation, is likely, since, if there is a ladder, someone will be at the top, or nearer the top than any other climber. But that belief is far removed from the monopoly theory.

Moreover, the “monopoly theory” is not essential to a firm personal religious belief. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, because I believe in the truth of my own conviction, I do not necessarily brand other beliefs as wholly untrue, except so far as they directly contradict my own. Let me once again insist that if I did not believe my religion to be of greater value than any other, I should not profess it. But that is a subjective conviction. Other people hold equally strong convictions in favour of their own standpoint and in depreciation of mine. I see no justification, therefore, in forcing my beliefs on those of other people, or of exercising moral pressure upon them to conform to my standpoint. So far as I perceive, or think that I perceive, that their position and critical beliefs are due to ignorance or misunderstanding as to my claims, I am ready to use such propaganda as is within my reach, to educate them. But I realize, as I have already suggested, that a proportion of our disagreement is due to the fundamental differences of human mentality, and that these individual convictions, however intense, are of subjective value alone. Somehow in any complete objective reality a place must be found for their positive convictions as well as for mine.

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We have, indeed, to distinguish carefully in this issue between subjective, personal belief, and our estimate as to objective values. I believe that Wagner rose on occasions to greater heights of composition than any other musician. But I entirely refuse to pass judgment on those who would say that Beethoven is superior to Wagner. My subjective appreciation of Wagner must not involve an objective depreciation of Beethoven.

To express any opinion as to the objective values of religions is a task which I do not feel myself capable of undertaking : and, indeed, I doubt the capacity of those who are most ready so to adjudicate. To say "this is the only religion which is acceptable to the mind of God" is virtually to assume that one is able to place oneself in the position of God. I do not find that my subjective conviction involves that superhuman undertaking. If I hazard an opinion at all as to the mind of God, it is an opinion for which I claim no sort of infallibility.

I see that God has created a variety of human mind, and that this has involved, up to the present, a number of different religions and anti-religious standpoints. I am bound to assume, therefore, that God permits the existence of various religions, that that is His scheme at present, whatever His ultimate purpose.

I believe the Christian Religion to be the fullest revelation. But belief in that religion involves belief that the Jewish Faith was also true, although a less perfect revelation. There-

fore I see no reason to deny, and a good deal of reason for believing, that other religions are comparative revelations.

Still less am I equipped for discovering God's ultimate purpose. I am not omniscient, and I have no gift of prophecy. I believe that He desires an ultimate unity. And the religion which will be ultimately universal seems to me to be one that is capable of containing all that is true in other revelations. My (again, subjective) belief is that it is the Catholic Religion which is capable of this absorption, though, to do so, there must be an incalculable purification of the form in which it is at present understood and practised by myself and my fellow-religionists.

I do not feel this to be a problem which directly disturbs me. My complaisance is due, not, I should maintain, to any half-hearted confidence in my own convictions, but to a realization that, however much I may indulge in personal speculations, it is a mockery for me to place myself in the position of God, so as to prejudge what He should do, and how He should do it.

IX

My Own Belief

I have indicated to some extent in this personal affirmation the reasons why I adopt my particular

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standpoint. A statement of my own conviction must necessarily have little interest for other people, but I offer, in summary form, a few of the considerations which confirm me in my allegiance.

I personally believe the Catholic Religion, as I understand it, to be more capable than any other religion of containing and absorbing what is true and best in other religions.

I believe the spirit within the Catholic Church is a divine revelation. In spite of the imperfections of the form, for which the human machinery has been responsible, I believe that I can trace a consistent truth within that form, which seems to me to bear the mark of superhuman inspiration.

The beauty of Catholic worship, and of the whole sacramental structure, helps me to approach the divine spirit of God more than any other medium of which I know.

The normal rule of Communion and Confession has been a consistent help to me in my moral life.

The mystical element in Catholicism in my judgment is unparalleled. The opportunity and the invitation to meditation and retreat opens up a field for my mind, which, though my devotional abilities are elementary, seem to me to be of incalculable value. The experience of Holy Week is for me one of such definite spiritual reality, that I sometimes wonder if anyone, who decided to undergo the full experience—not as a casual stranger at one or two Holy Week services—but intelligently and fully taking his share in

the whole course—could emerge from the test entirely unconvinced. I do not know of any other religion which could provide an experience equal in spiritual value to this.

Finally, I find that my conviction as to the essential need for unfettered liberty of thought is not fundamentally obstructed by Catholicism in its Anglo-Catholic form. I do not believe that there is any principle in Catholicism which should restrict a liberal freedom. A short while ago I happened to discover the reprint of an article on Martin Luther which appeared in *The Westminster Review* in 1884. It is an interesting testimony to this contention, particularly as it is written by the freethinker, Karl Pearson,¹ who is therefore not likely to be prejudiced in the Catholic direction. "The Catholic Church," he says, "needed reform urgently enough, but the reform which it needed was that of Erasmus, not that of Luther. Had the labours of Erasmus not been blighted by the passionate appeal of Wittenberg, at first to the ignorance of the masses, and then to the greed of princes, we believe that the Catholic Church would have developed with the intelligent development of mankind, would have become the universal instrument of moral progress and mental culture. . . . If the Church in 1500 could contain an Erasmus, a Reuchlin, and a Muth, who shall say that in our day Professor Huxley might not have been numbered among its members?"

¹ Reprinted in the *Ethic of Free Thought*, by Karl Pearson.

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I confess that this view of the Reformation is very much my own. It is usually a disaster when extremists swamp the work of genuine reformers, and it has been so in this case. Karl Pearson thinks that it is now too late, and that the Catholic Church has lost her opportunity. That is precisely the issue on which I disagree.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE FUTURE OF RELIGION

I

The Need for Complacency and Anxiety

THE last chapter sounded a penultimate note of complacency. But as this book is intended largely to rouse people from their complacency, it is well that we should turn our faces in the opposite direction and realize the plain facts of the situation. There is nothing inconsistent in this double attitude. Ideal conduct should always consist of at least two contrary qualities, for if we press one virtue to an extreme and ignore its opposite, we turn that virtue into a vice. Humble people who have no self-confidence, kind people who are not firm, generous people who have forgotten how to say "no," probably do as much harm as they do good.

Similarly we need both to be complacent and, at the same time, sufficiently anxious to bestir ourselves. We require faith in God, or in providence, or in the laws of natural development—however we choose to describe them : but we are also required to contribute our own energy in order to make the world better, and not merely to

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sit down and wait for these improvements to happen. Quietism can easily become sheer lethargy.

It is not really difficult to know how to use these two opposites. The degree to which our activities are limited is clearly marked. If we do our share, and concern ourselves with the immediate future, and teach our children to be ready to take up a similar responsibility, we need not worry over the distant future. No amount of worry will alter the course of ultimate events. They lie beyond our control, and their nature can be, so far as we are concerned, but a matter for idle speculation.

II

Organized Religion and the Intelligent Types

The general position in the religious world which I have endeavoured to indicate is that institutional religion is gradually losing its hold on the nation. The breach is widening. The decrease of adherents continues. There are no signs on any large scale, at present, of a recovery. The problem is, therefore, whether this decay will continue, or whether it will be arrested, and what, if it continues, will be the more immediate consequences.

The fundamental trouble with institutional religion is that it is not retaining or attracting the

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more intelligent types of people. Protestant Christianity appeals mainly to the emotions, to pious emotions which have little intellectual basis, and it fails entirely to offer any sort of æsthetic beauty in its worship. The intellectual and the artistic types of mind are therefore entirely estranged from it, and its puritanic strain is definitely anti-intellectual. The Catholic form of Christianity—Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholicism, that is to say—show a more virile condition, and the Anglo-Catholic Movement, in particular, bears the marks of a comparative religious revival, on a small scale. But the appeal is largely emotional, though its emotional level is of a much more cultured nature than Evangelical sentimentality. Consequently, the kind of people who are mainly being attracted to the ranks of Catholicism are people who are more emotionally than mentally developed. Very often this involves the inclusion of that very undesirable species known as the “spike.” There are few human species who are more unpleasing than those people whose emotions are out of hand, and who have no intellectual groundwork to counterbalance their sentimental excesses. That is why the average pious lady and the effeminately religious young man are so displeasing to the ordinarily intelligent class of people.

These are types which will probably always exist, and they must have a place therefore in any Church which claims to possess a universal mission. But it is fatal if they predominate. In

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the Roman Catholic Church they are largely controlled by the type of mind which is definitely mechanical. Roman Catholicism, by its network of ritual and obligation encourages the mechanical tendency in religion. Men and women do what they are told, and, provided they fulfil this duty, they see no particular reason why they should imitate the Good Samaritan in extraneous religious works of mercy. The Roman Catholic outlook on social and domestic problems tends to be hard and prussianized. The laws of the Church have primarily to be obeyed, whatever their consequences. In countries and districts where Roman Catholicism has undisputed control, humanitarian ideals tend to remain at discount. If we except the Religious Orders, the monks and nuns who have set a glorious example to mankind by the unselfish and heroic ministry they have performed, we find that in Catholic nations the sufferings and social misery of non-Catholics are frequently viewed with indifference : animals are notoriously ill-treated : militarism is tolerated : and we do not find the outstanding stimulus for educating the richer classes out of their semi-savage sport of killing animals, hunting, bull-fighting, and similar forms of brute courage.

The fatal element in Roman Catholicism is that it is not merely negative towards intellectual activity : it tends to be definitely hostile. Modernism is not a creed : it is an attitude of mind. It is the attitude of mind which demands the right to examine and inquire into everything, and which

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recognizes no justification in shutting off certain fields from such inquiry. It is this attitude of mind, and not merely the incidental conclusions which this attitude of mind, in certain cases, has reached, which orthodox Roman Catholicism has refused to tolerate. If you are a Roman Catholic you must limit your inquiries to areas where no article of faith has been pronounced. Where the Church has spoken there must be no free inquiry, because, whatever inquiries you carry out, you must never arrive at conclusions contrary to those of the Church.

That attitude is inevitably anti-intellectual, because it limits the freedom of the mind. There can never be an escape from that *impasse*, for intellectual activity, of its very essence, demands freedom.

Rome cannot, therefore, hope to appeal to the intellectual type as a whole. Her strong asset is that the beauty of her worship excites the sympathy of cultured artists. For the rest, she will probably continue to draw mainly on those who are willing to accept the conservative traditions in which they have been brought up, the "mechanically-minded" type—which we have already mentioned—the people who desire an oracle, an authority which claims to be certain—whether it is true or not, and the curious type of mind which lives in a world of petty controversy and has very little interest in anything else.

Anglican Catholicism, as we have seen, also appeals largely to the emotions. The Movement

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has made much progress, and shows signs of a good deal of energy and enthusiastic life, but I must repeat my impression that it is attracting, as a whole, the emotional type—the romanticists who only see the good, and refuse to be realists in regard to the imperfections, of medievalism—the sort of people who, for example, are frequently Jacobites.

As one who has been sometimes concerned with reading manuscripts and printed articles contributed by Anglo-Catholic men and women, I am made aware that occasionally there is not only an unintellectual, but an anti-intellectual spirit—a definite disparagement of intelligence and all its works. Such a spirit is, of course, a cancer which, if ever it spread beyond a small cranky coterie, would destroy the Movement. But that is hardly likely to occur, for unintelligence is not normally an infectious disease.

Anglo-Catholicism also attracts the controversialist type, the sort of person who likes to shock Protestants and to be told he is a Jesuit in disguise. It attracts the artistic type, though to a lesser extent, probably, than Rome, because the normal Anglo-Catholic service is at present slightly less perfect in its ceremonial and liturgical structure.

But Anglo-Catholicism has an opportunity, in so far as it is not involved so heavily in the anti-intellectual commitments of Rome. The Anglican atmosphere makes a Liberal Catholicism more possible than Roman Catholic discipline allows. A certain number of leading Anglo-Catholics

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possess a liberal outlook, and the issue, so far as this Movement is concerned, is as to whether liberal or obscurantist will predominate. The obscurantist generally desires to imitate the Roman standard, even as regards the intellectual outlook. With a tightening up of discipline he might be able to suppress the liberal outlook as effectually as has been done in the Church of Rome.

I have never been able to understand why sacramental religion, with its extraordinary beauty and culture, should be incompatible with liberalism. I do not see why the Catholic machinery should inevitably crush out freedom of thought and inquiry. So far, the two attitudes in practice have not been found compatible. Indeed, the tendency of all institutionalism has been to suppress individual liberty.

For the rest—I leave the ordinary Church of England to a further context—the unorthodox movements—Christian Science, Theosophy, and Spiritualism, as distinct from scientific psychical research—have similarly failed to enlist the intellectual type. They attract the crank in large numbers. And they bear prominently the marks of sectarianism—that is an emphasis on their peculiar tenets which leads to a sense of mental disproportion. Those who make Spiritualism and Christian Science a religion are rarely normal people, and certainly few prominently intelligent men have enlisted in their ranks.

There are, of course, a large number of simple-

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minded and devout people to be found in all religions, and it is to the credit of religion that their presence is encouraged. But this does not affect the absence of those whose intelligence is more highly developed, and who, I must again repeat, are the ultimate factors in influencing the coming generations.

III

Anglican Comprehensiveness

One consequence of the drift away from institutional religion may be to bring about, more or less rapidly, in some form, the reunion of Christendom.

The movement towards such reunion is evident in several directions. And as men are beginning to appreciate that reunion is unlikely to be effected by reducing all religions to a uniform pattern, and by thus diminishing the extent of the collective Christian appeal, it is worth considering the position of the Anglican Church in this respect. For this Church is in miniature a union of various religious systems, and would, therefore, play a large part in any reunion which was widespread enough to embrace both the Catholic and the Protestant bodies.

The Church of England is at present suffering from a conflict of ideals. She is anxious to remain comprehensive, but she is afraid of disunity and

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disruption. Her bishops are apparently resolved to follow a policy of compromise between the two influences, a compound which the present Archbishop of Canterbury has described as "ordered freedom." In effect this is to limit her comprehensiveness. Anglo-Catholics, in particular, are to be restrained from many practices which they have adopted. Authority is to be restored, and there is to be introduced an "Anglican Standard," to which all the existing parties are comparatively to conform.

Unfortunately, as we have seen, the Anglican type of worship is, on the whole, of a low standard, and makes a very limited appeal. And a further disadvantage is that this compromise inevitably limits the degree of comprehensiveness. It is not comprehensive enough, for example, to include the full Anglo-Catholic standard.

You are bound to limit comprehensiveness the moment you begin to set up an order to which everyone must conform. The Church of England has not yet solved the problem of combining variety and unity. She rejoices that she is able to embrace the Evangelical and the Modernist and the Anglo-Catholic. But she imagines that the only way to secure unity is to say to each of them, "You must give up certain things in order to be a little more uniform with one another."

The result of this is to make each of them dissatisfied, and, therefore, actually to increase the disunity.

It is, of course, true that comprehensiveness has

the effect of reducing the collective authority of the institution. The Church of England, for example, cannot often speak with the certain voice of which the Roman Catholic Church can boast, for there are few occasions on which all her constituent parts are agreed. This is one of the arguments which is used in favour of Roman Catholicism by those who believe that unqualified statements, and statements which are uttered with certainty, are characteristics which suggest that the statements are true. To those, however, who are sceptical of this test of truth, the difficulty of the Church of England in giving authoritative declarations will not seem altogether a disadvantage. The less the capacity for making dogmatic declarations, the less opportunity there will be, in their opinion, for the kind of commitments which become a serious handicap in the development of future generations.

Whether we believe that the difficulty of a comprehensive Church in making unqualified statements is a blessing or the reverse, we shall all agree that comprehensiveness in the institution involves administrative difficulties. A uniform, compact body is the easiest to organize. Where, as in the Church of England, you have virtually two or three different religions to deal with, problems arise as to the rival demands of each of these groups, particularly in country areas where only one church is within reach. It is this increasing difficulty which has prompted the Church of England to attempt to enforce greater order than has existed hitherto, and the Revised Prayer Book

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was an endeavour to authorize two types of worship to which everyone would be compelled to conform. But this, as we have seen, is merely to decrease the existing amount of comprehensiveness, chiefly by outlawing a large degree of Anglo-Catholic practice.

I have never been able to see why the Anglican Communion could not secure unity within its ranks without decreasing the existing amount of variety which she at present contains.

The time has, no doubt, come when the Church of England, as a body within the Anglican Communion, should set more definite limits and insist on a slightly greater degree of uniformity, than at present exists. This settlement will probably involve the prohibition of certain devotional forms of worship—probably in the Anglo-Catholic direction—inasmuch as positive extremes tend to disturb a settlement and to attract more controversial attention than illegal omissions. But the Anglo-Catholic Movement involves two distinct tendencies—one of which is strictly High Church and Anglican in its expression, and which would come, therefore, within any reasonable degree of comprehensiveness to which the Church of England limited herself. The other Anglo-Catholic tendency is Latin in devotional expression, although it is not, as is generally supposed, Roman Catholic in its doctrinal interpretation of that devotion. This wing of the Movement will almost certainly find it impossible to subscribe to the limitations which the Church of

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England must impose when she sets her house in order. But it should certainly be comprehended within the boundaries of the Anglican Communion.

It would be quite possible to form a group in communion with Canterbury, but for which the Church of England was indirectly responsible—by whom she was committed in fact, no more than, and just as much as she is committed by the Anglican Church in the United States or South Africa.

I have come to believe that the formation of such a jurisdiction, into which Anglo-Catholics can “contract out,” while remaining an integral part of the Anglican Communion and in full communion with the English episcopate, is an inevitable feature of any future Anglican settlement.

But the main body, the official Church of England, would still contain many different religious varieties, although her comprehensiveness would have been diminished by the “contracting-out” of the left wing of the Anglo-Catholic Movement. She would still, therefore, have to face the problem of how to set boundaries to her legitimate membership.

These limits should be drawn by discovering a basis of fundamental belief and allegiance between all parties. The common unity would be found at the centre of the circle, rather than at the circumference. The basis would be the Apostles’ Creed, or some other article of faith which was mutually acceptable. Once this basis

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of allegiance was clearly defined, the Church of England could afford to tolerate variety without incurring the risk of confusion.

The administrative difficulty would nevertheless remain, particularly in "single-church" areas, as, for instance, in cases where an Anglo-Catholic incumbent was in charge of a parish, and a number of Evangelical or Moderate parishioners found themselves unable to take part in the services. But this would not be a serious difficulty to overcome if the principle of comprehensiveness were really desired. One solution, for instance, would be to empower the diocesan bishop to license an extra-parochial clergyman to hold occasional services in the parish church of the character which the aggrieved parishioners desired. The same scheme would apply where an Anglo-Catholic minority found themselves estranged by an Evangelical or Modernist régime. If comprehensiveness were really the ideal, an incumbent would be willing to have his freehold in the parish church infringed upon to the limited extent of allowing services to be held, of which he did not personally approve, provided that there was a clear agreement that this worship did not involve a doctrine which was fundamentally forbidden by the limits agreed upon. And as the parish church is morally the possession of the *bona-fide* Church parishioners, such a qualification of the "parson's freehold" might not be altogether a bad innovation.

The real trouble in the Church of England is

that she is comprehensive in practice to a degree which most of her adherents do not desire. And if they are not converted to this theory, the inevitable result must be disruption. This will ensure a greater unity, within each separated unit, of the kind which is secured by uniformity : but that is not the only kind of unity. And the result would inevitably be that the Church of England became proportionately less able to share in the work of Christian reunion. That type of unity makes her a narrower bridge which reaches less far in the Catholic, and probably also in other directions. She becomes more definitely a compact, watertight denomination, and her usefulness so far as Christian reunion prospects are concerned is accordingly lessened. I should regard that consequence as a serious disaster, and it was in order to avert it that I voted in the Church Assembly both against the 1927 and the 1928 Prayer Books.

IV

Modern Thought is Essentially Religious

Considerations as to the likelihood, or the nature, of religious reunion are of no importance, however, if the secularist claim is true. For, on this theory, sectarian disruption and the breach between Church and people are inevitable stages which lead up to the final decay of all religious

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belief. A sceptical race will no longer feel the least interest as to whether Christendom continues, or settles its domestic squabbles. And, even if a consolidated Christian front were established, it would be too late to exercise any influence upon the liberty of human thought.

But is the secularist estimate an accurate one? In the opening chapter of this book I stated my opinion that it was entirely false. I do not believe that the national drift away from institutional religion is a drift away from religion. I believe that the majority of intelligent men and women were never further from the atheistical secularist standpoint than now, and that there is no likelihood that they will draw nearer to it. Though, on so large an issue, it is impossible to do more than give general reasons in support of this belief, it may be useful, in these concluding pages, to set out such general reasons in summary form.

Let us once more consider the difference between the religious and the anti-religious case. Religion holds that behind the world which is perceptible to our senses—the chemical, or material world—there is a spiritual world—I am compelled to use a vague and somewhat unsatisfactory phrase. Religion holds that this spiritual world is as real, if not more real, than the chemical world, that man is already in touch with the spiritual world, and indeed that that world is his eventual destination. It holds that the spiritual world is not composed of blind forces, working

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without conscious purpose, but that it is dominated by Intelligence. And it holds, further, that man's relations to the chemical world are inexplicable and incomplete unless the existence of the spiritual world is taken into account.

The secularist theory is that no such spiritual world exists, or that, if it does, it is so remote and unknown, that no account of it can, or need, be taken.

That is the fundamental issue between religion and secularism. All other issues are secondary, or are particular applications arising out of the basic religious claim.

In which camp, then, will modern thought eventually find itself, and which, at the present moment, is it more inclined to favour?

If we take the general conclusions of the intellectual scientific mind we shall be applying a vital test; for the intellectual majority, as I have continually insisted, ultimately affects popular thought. And particularly is this likely to be true in the age on which we are entering, since the distinctive note of this age will certainly be its scientific attitude. For almost the first time in history science has become free to pursue its investigations, unfettered by any hostile traditional influences. And therefore the conclusions of modern thought will be affected more directly by scientific judgment than by any other factor.

It is clear, I maintain, that the developments of modern science are almost without exception in the anti-secularist direction. Science no longer

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confines its attention to the physical and biological field. Even if we exclude the youthful science of psychical research, as too inconclusive as yet to be called upon for evidence, psychology is an example of the manner in which science has already crossed the threshold into a super-material world. In mind we are face to face with properties which do not belong wholly to the chemical sphere. It is true that the behaviourists would reduce all thought to the domain of purely organic activity, but the behaviourists do not represent the main body of psychological opinion. The tendency, even of the materialist school, is to accept the existence of a world which is wider than the world of matter as it was formerly defined. Bertrand Russell suggests that spirit and matter are the same substance. A further interesting example of this scientific tendency is to be found in Mr. J. W. Dunne's *Experiment with Time* (A. and C. Black, Ltd.). The implications of "Serialism" may reach further than our imagination can appreciate, but in any case it is perhaps significant that the author should claim to present scientific proof of the existence of the soul, of the immortality of the soul, and of God. These conclusions are reached on lines entirely removed from theological, philosophical or psychical considerations.

Moreover, if we turn to the nature of modern intelligent thought—passing, that is to say, from the intellectual scientific minority to the wider circle of popular intelligent opinion—we shall find

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that the religious claim is accepted in principle, however much the details may be in dispute.

Modern men and women do not accept the orthodox interpretations of God. They hesitate to define God at all. But they are forced to believe that the universe of existence is not limited, either to the world of their senses or of their imagination. They are convinced that something lies beyond. If we are to express their standpoint in a crude summary form, we are justified, I maintain, in saying that, however much they differ from orthodox religion, they differ in detail and not in principle. They do not deny the reality of spirit or of God. They reject neither the religious nor the moral intuitions. They find the secularist claim that these intuitions are wholly delusions—the heritage of superstitious ignorance—as literally incredible.

The rejection of the secularist dogma by modern intelligence may be explained in the form of four propositions.

First, the religious and moral intuitions in man are too deeply seated for him to feel that he is capable, or justified if he were capable, of uprooting them. Belief in God, however defined, and belief in good, are so integral a part of his consciousness that he distrusts the secularist theory of their genesis as quite inadequate.

Secondly, man is conscious that the world of mind is as real, at the very least, as the world of matter. He does not consider it credible that he is a machine, for he is convinced that thought is

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something distinct from any physical property. This confirms him in the conclusion that the world of matter is not the only world, and that the religious claim is more likely to be right than the secularist claim. He sees that the secularist claim is much narrower, for it rests on the supposition that truth and reality lie within the range of our limited human perceptions. The religious claim is infinitely wider, and is therefore much more probable, since the whole truth is likely to stretch far beyond the little groove of our parochial experiences.

Thirdly, he is vaguely conscious that when he acts and thinks what is good he is working in harmony with the universe, and that, when he acts or thinks destructively, or evil, he is working against the principles of the universe. In spite, therefore, of many phenomena in the universe which appear to him to be evil, he accepts the religious claim that God is good.

Fourthly, he is conscious that there is more in religion than its outward expressions, its forms and definitions and human institutions. When, therefore, he sees that secularism and science have in some cases succeeded in compelling religious forms to change and even to surrender, he realizes that they have not succeeded in striking at the spirit of religion. He sees, in fact, that religion is able to re-state and re-express in other forms, so that it can adapt itself to more intelligent and educated conditions. Whereas, if the secularist case were true, and it were nothing more than a

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primitive superstition, religion would already have perished. But he sees no evidence that it is perishing, or ever will perish.

v

The Ultimate Vision of a Universal Religion

Here, then, is this vast body of modern opinion, critical of, and completely estranged from any kind of organized religion, yet fundamentally religious in belief. Will the gulf be bridged? Can religious institutionalism ever regain contact with this intelligent Gentile world? Will the Church, indeed, desire to fulfil this greater reunion, or will she be content to demand, as the price offered, an uncompromising surrender to her claims?

If religion decides that this body of thought is incapable, or unworthy, of reconciliation, the Churches will harden into little compact fortresses, efficient and energetic within their own borders, but completely cut off from the main currents of national thought. They will continue no doubt to survive, but they will no longer form an integral part of English national life.

I believe that that divorce will be an unfortunate influence upon national life, because, without any sort of institutionalism, without even indirect contact with a Church, the national conception of religion is likely to remain vague and chaotic.

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There is an acute danger, as history has shown, in over-organizing religious thought : that is the nemesis of ecclesiastical supremacies. But there is another danger, namely, the danger of leaving religious thought unformed and unordered, of exaggerating individual independence to such an extent that there is no possibility of any corporate expression of religious belief or worship.

If my estimate of modern opinion is substantially accurate, it is not inevitable that there should be a complete breach between Church and nation. For modern thought is not hostile to religion—it is deeply religious.

It is religious, but it is highly critical of orthodoxy. And this brings us to the proposition which has already been advanced, and which will be resented by many people—namely, that modern thought is far from being unintelligent ; it is more directly influenced by intelligent intellectual considerations than is the average orthodox religious thought.

If this is true, it is significant, because intelligence is more likely, in the end, to win the prize of truth, than unintelligence.

So, if this contact is to be re-established between Church and people, the Church must be prepared for drastic change and reformation, just as she has needed reformation in the past. It is quite possible, though not inevitable, that this reformation may involve a settlement of Christian dissensions and some scheme of reunion. If this is contemplated, or any less ambitious degree of it is con-

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templated, we must be prepared to realize that such reunion will inevitably mean the toleration of variety, both of the forms of belief and of worship. It is inconceivable that unity will ever be secured by crushing the existing denominational varieties into one uniform pattern—so long, at least, as human minds and temperaments vary.

Christian unity, however, would not necessarily be that indefinite undenominational spectre which Catholics suspect, whenever they are presented with a scheme which invites the inter-communion of sects. It requires no great imagination to conceive a scheme of reunion which would involve no serious compromise of existing principles. Such a Christian Church would require a common basis of belief, but, beyond that, each denomination could remain free to fulfil its own method of government, to follow its own form of worship, and even to differ in its interpretative creed. The denominations could, indeed, remain distinct as self-governing guilds within the embracing Christian Church. The term "Church," indeed, would be restricted in the vocabulary of any group or denomination to its own immediate circle. Outside the episcopal Church there would be, as now, wider circles inviting a more general type of membership which did not subscribe to the more developed Catholic profession. Thus, for example, the Catholic Church, as it is understood by Anglican and Roman Catholics, would be an inner circle, uncompromised by the outer circles of Wesleyan and Presbyterian membership, except

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so far as it possessed a comparative contact with them by being associated in one universal league.

Is this vision of a number of self-governing guilds, a "League of independent Religions," an impossible ideal? I do not think so, provided that Christians could extricate themselves from the limitations of a sectarian outlook. There would be no practical difficulty if Christians really desired to overcome it. So that we pass at once to the further question as to whether such a conception is a desirable ideal. Those who most violently repudiate it will be those who consider that what, from their standpoint, is a half-truth, is worse than complete error. No argument is possible with those whose mathematical calculations are so distorted that they regard a half as greater than a whole. We cannot take serious account of those Protestants who would regard any sort of association with Catholics, such as I have suggested, as a compromise with evil. Nor can we be affected by those Catholics who really believe that a Protestantism, which accepts a proportion of mutual Christian belief, is worse than entire scepticism.

Those, however, who are not so persuaded will realize some value at least in establishing a liaison between the various Christian bodies. Unity is more likely to develop in an atmosphere of comparative association, than where each body is completely isolated. The comprehensiveness of the Church of England is useful, as we have seen, in so far as it draws together men of very different

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outlook. At the lowest computation, it is probably better that such men should be associated than that they should be isolated from one another.

But this reunion would involve change. It would involve the surrender of the theory that men must necessarily follow one particular rule in faith and practice to come within the covenant. If indeed Christendom were extended so as to embrace the largest section of modern men and women, it would be compelled to recognize the non-institutionalist, the man who refuses to commit himself to any organized form of belief or profession. In that case a modification would be involved of the conception that men must at all costs be made to go to church, that on almost any pretext we must induce them to come within the church doors, and that we must count the success or failure of religion by the number of the seats which are occupied. A completely universal Church would somehow have to include those who are never likely to be regular church-goers. Not only would it then be necessary to admit that men are not necessarily "saved" by going to church, but it would have to be admitted that there were ways of approach to God which lie outside any of the formal thoroughfares of orthodox membership. That is the crux which ultimately must be faced if the complete bridge is to be built.

It ought to be clear to everyone that this type of reunion is diametrically opposed to undenominational schemes of reunion which are generally put forward when reunion is in the air. Such schemes

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contemplate linking up the various denominations so closely, that each is compromised by the other, and Nonconformist ministers are to be admitted to episcopal altars, while Anglo-Catholics must cease to do anything which offends their Protestant brethren. Dr. Arnold's cure for Christendom at the beginning of the nineteenth century was a Church so undogmatic that it should exclude none except the Roman Catholics. And that has been the tendency of reunion schemes ever since.

No wonder that such schemes are suspect in Catholic eyes. They are based upon the same fatal delusion that unity can come only by uniformity. But the reunion which I have outlined is entirely contrary to the undenominational scheme. It is pan-denominational, a complete freedom and independence for all existing religious bodies. The difference between that ideal and the present state of affairs is that the present independence is accompanied by isolation. This pan-denominational reunion would link up the various bodies on whatever common basis could be found, so as to form the general confederation, much as the Anglican Communion does to-day, except that each body would have its own decentralized government and would be entirely uncompromised by any of the other groups.

The value of such a federation would be the association and intercourse it would encourage. It would not mature until the narrower sectarian spirit were cast aside. If it were really cast aside, such a federation would certainly tend to develop

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its sense of unity, and the basis of agreement would probably in time become strengthened and extended. Intercourse breeds understanding. Indeed, such a league of religions would be a stage towards a more complete unity, and in my view is the only way in which such a unity is ever likely to be achieved.

It may be that this is a vision beyond our scope. It may be that there are other solutions, and better developments which are unfolding in the womb of the future. On that I do not attempt to draw a conclusion. I have pleaded only for two fundamental considerations, and they shall be repeated as the finale of this inquiry. The first is that modern thought is intelligent, and that it is intensely religious. The second is that orthodox religionists need a purging of heart and an infinitely wider outlook than, in the main, they at present possess. They must be prepared to make immense changes in the form and expression, if needs be, of their faith. They must come to see that the form, the human organization, the interpretation of truth, the expression of their worship is but the outer framework of the truth which is the spirit of religion. There must be no idolatry of the form. There is nothing inherently sacred in any form. There is no surrender of the truth because the form is reformed. For religion is greater than the form it inspires. And, because it is greater, religion can survive, and will survive, though the forms are changed as one age succeeds another.

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If because the framework of the Church is reshaped, and the doctrine is restated, and the vision of Churchmen is widened, the truth of religion is surrendered, then it means that there is no spirit behind the framework. Religion becomes but an organization. The body is a machine without a soul.

But religion is greater than that. The Church is greater than the Churchman.

And, because the Church is alive, she must change in the process of growth. We must not obstruct and resent change. We must not allow our limited perceptions and our traditional prejudices to block the process of growth. If we cannot overcome our petty-mindedness, we must not allow it to predominate over others, and certainly not over the Church herself. There is room for the smaller minds within the Church. But it is a tragedy when they assume control.

The world of to-day is profoundly in need of religion. I have expressed in these pages my own sympathy with many of the characteristics of the modern age, but that sympathy does not blind me to the lack of inspiration from which the modern age is suffering. There are few impressions of which I am made more continuously aware than the perpetual desire of modern intellectual thought to discover a sound religious philosophical standpoint. And what is this but the realization of the need for a religion which can surmount intelligent destructive criticism and provide the source of spiritual inspiration ?

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We are in these days too apt to forget that there is a communal, as well as an individual aspect of religion. Just as in artistic and intellectual and commercial activities the work of each individual must ultimately be subjected to the test of the value which that work has in relation to the needs of the whole human race, so I conceive the spiritual beliefs and practices of man also require a collective relationship. And this relationship institutional religion alone can supply. Institutional religion, of its very nature, has many dangers. But the essential implications of religion will remain unrealized until the individual sees that he is an inseparable part of one Body. Religion is primarily social, not selfish.

The modern age is asking for a religion. We have only to examine the condition of all forms of contemporary art to realize how completely absent is any spiritual ideal comparable with the Catholic inspiration which produced the masterpieces of medievalism.

Everywhere men who have ceased to believe are desperately anxious to discover a basis of rational belief. It will be a tragedy if this demand remains unsatisfied.

Can the old religion supply this need? Can the Church shake away the cobwebs which have accumulated in the generations, without compromising the faith which has been committed to her charge? Can Churchmen rouse themselves to a realization both of dawning opportunities and of threatening perils? I believe that

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it is possible, though the difficulties which stand in the way are immense. But it will need a purging of heart, a sacrifice of many pleasant prejudices, of fundamental changes in the orthodox and the institutional standpoint, if these difficulties are to be overcome. There must be an altogether wider vision, an escape from the mental grooves where so many well-meaning Christians are prisoners.

There must be change if there is growth. If the forms which the Church has created have become so crystallized that change is impossible, there is no future. The Church will have failed. For, when the body has ceased to recuperate and to repair the waste, it has begun to die. Failure or victory, stagnation or progress, death or life—that is the issue more critically before us than at any previous moment in human history. And though we may believe fervently in the divine promise that “the gates of hell shall not prevail,” it is our responsibility, so far as we are concerned, which, from the human aspect, must decide the issue.

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